

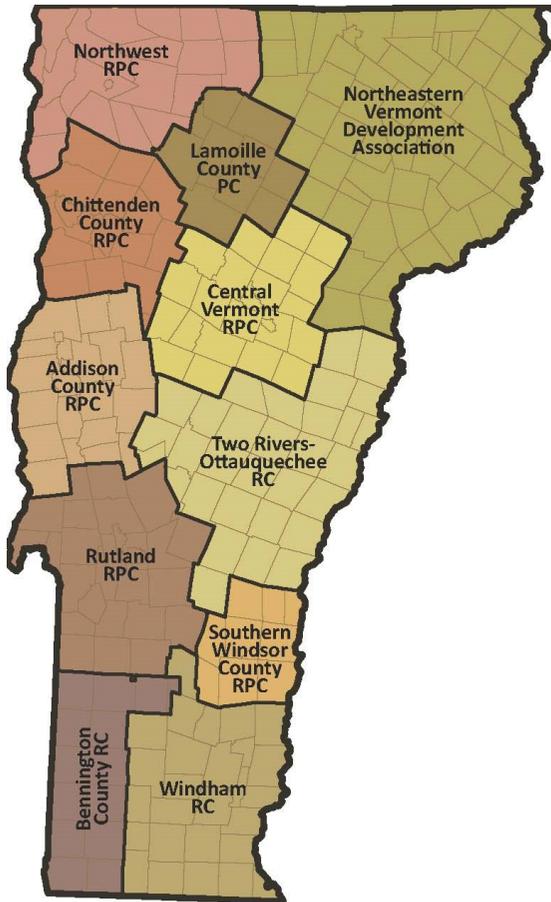


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FISCAL YEAR 2021

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## Annual Report



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**VAPDA.org**

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# Addison County Regional Planning Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) serves 21 municipalities within Addison County. ACRPC assists towns in the Addison Region (the “Region”) to help provide effective local government and works cooperatively with them to address statewide, regional and local issues.

Municipalities choose to be members of ACRPC. Each municipality’s legislative body appoints 1, 2 or 3 Commissioners, depending upon the population of the municipality, to represent the municipality’s interest on ACRPC’s Board. Additionally, ACRPC’s Board accommodates up to six citizen-interest commissioners who represent other regional interests such as business and industry, natural resources, agriculture and social services. ACRPC delegates a significant portion of its work to six (6) sub-committees, which review various aspects of the Commission’s business. Commissioners serve on these committees and make recommendations for action to the full Commission. All of ACRPC’s committees are advisory. Only the full Commission has the authority to make decisions to bind ACRPC. Six highly-qualified staff with more than 100 years of combined professional experience provide support to the Commission and its committees and execute the Commission’s work program.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

RPCs act as cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont’s municipalities. Of the 21 towns served by ACRPC, only Middlebury employs a full-time planner. All other communities rely on volunteer planning commissions aided and supplemented by ACRPC’s staff or outside consultants. ACRPC’s work in recent years has focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), modernizing bylaws, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development, flood resiliency planning and forest block and habitat connector mapping and policy. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential to ensure a smooth state and local permitting process. This work is supported through a combination of Federal, State and Local funding sources. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the “At Work” map; highlights include:

- ACRPC worked with the Towns of Bristol, Cornwall, Orwell and Salisbury to re-write their municipal plans.
- ACRPC helped the Towns of Bristol and Shoreham amend their regulations to include DRBs and subdivision regulations. It also helped Monkton draft new zoning regulations to implement their plan.
- ACRPC provided technical support to all Zoning Administrators within the Region and held Zoning Administrator Roundtables.
- ACRPC conducted municipal consultations in Monkton and Vergennes.
- ACRPC provided draft Forest Block sections to Orwell, Cornwall, and Salisbury to identify priority forest blocks and habitat corridors for their municipal plans.
- ACRPC worked with the Towns of Cornwall, Panton and Salisbury to secure 2021 municipal planning grants (MPGs). Cornwall and Salisbury are using the funds to update their town plans and incorporate forestry integrity and flood resiliency sections. Salisbury is also studying how to balance future growth with existing natural resources. As part of Cornwall’s grant work the planning commission is developing a series of trainings for citizen planners. ACRPC continued

work on 2020 municipal planning grants with Shoreham and Ferrisburgh. These projects both studied how their communities could support increased density and affordable housing in their village centers.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING**

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

This year ACRPC continued work on updating the Population and Housing and Economic Development sections of its Regional Plan. In June the final draft of the Population and Housing section was delivered to the ACRPC commission for review. The past year was a challenging time to project what might occur in the future, specifically in regards to the Region's population and housing. Throughout the document, 'Covid-19' boxes were inserted highlighting some of the unforeseen effects the pandemic has had on our community. ACRPC implements its Plan's goals by assisting communities with access to resources, education and funding opportunities to address their housing needs. A significant portion of the Housing Plan's goals focus on downtowns and village centers and how communities can plan to increase housing opportunities in these locations.

In Middlebury and Vergennes, ACRPC continued to serve as the Municipal Project Manager on several community infrastructure projects creating sidewalks or shared use paths to tie neighborhoods and industrial areas to downtown Middlebury and to tie the Otter Creek Basin with downtown Vergennes. ACRPC also completed a Lake Champlain Basin Program Grant to create a plan to improve wastewater and stormwater infrastructure in the Town of Bristol. ACRPC continued its participation in the Zoning for Great Neighborhoods project this year and is incorporating outcomes of this project into its work with member communities. Please see Economic and Community Development and Special Projects for more details.

## **BROWNFIELDS**

Vermont RPCs have sought and been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. RPCs have performed environmental site assessments on brownfield locations throughout the state. Environmental site assessments allow properties, and formerly degraded properties, to be sold, remediated (if needed), developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

- ACRPC does not have any Brownfields funding of its own at this time. However, ACRPC can work with its member municipalities and ANR to address brownfield issues on an ad hoc basis and is applying for EPA brownfield assessment grant funds next year.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont to achieve long term economic gain.

- ACRPC continued to work with the Town of Bristol to support increased development within its Village Planning Area by supporting implementation of the Stoney Hill Master Plan. Bristol has traditionally had problems retaining its commercial businesses because they outgrow its infrastructure. This business park is being designed within the Village Planning Area to create new spaces for growing businesses within Bristol’s village, supporting the economic growth of this area.
- ACRPC works with the Addison County Climate Economy Action Center to coordinate and advertise events.
- ACRPC is working jointly with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to create an EDA Comprehensive Economic Development plan for the region, which it also intends to feed the Regional Economic Development plan that will serve as a portion of the Addison County Regional Plan and also serve as the Plan for the Economic Development Corporation. ACRPC also worked with ACEDC to support several grant applications for local businesses.
- ACRPC continued working with the Town of Shoreham planning a mixed-use, residential development, abutting the heart of the village center.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through contracts with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), RPCs coordinate the federally funded Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort provides a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TAC). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the State’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement. RPCs help fulfill five transportation planning objectives. The Objectives and ACRPC’s work under each are listed below.

### **Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

a. Toward this end, ACRPC held 10 TAC meetings, which included participation from 31 different people representing 12 of the Region’s communities.

b. ACRPC also assisted with project meetings on 15 separate projects or planning topics. These included:

- An intersection study in Bristol
- Walk Bike Council and Triangle Bike Loop
- Options for improving stormwater management around Orwell’s salt shed
- Road Foreman Meetings
- Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages Study
- Tri-Valley Transit - E&D Committee, Regional Operating Committee, and Finance Committee
- Assisted in coordinating moving the historic New Haven train depot

### **Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

ACRPC hosts the current regional transportation plan, adopted in July 2018. It uses this plan to inform its participation in both Act 250 and Title 30, Section 248. Last year ACRPC participated in hearings about the Middlebury Airport. ACRPC also participated extensively in Tri Valley Transits planning

committees and activities. ACRPC staff served on the Executive, Finance, Development, Nominating, Area Operating and E&D Committees. Lastly, ACRPC's TAC worked to Prioritize VTrans potential projects within the Region.

### **Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

ACRPC spent approximately seventy-six percent (76%) of its transportation budget helping its member municipalities. Activities included road foremen meetings for 10 of its member towns, assisting three municipalities with transportation related grants, conducting municipal transportation inventories in three communities, conducting five municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies; helping seven communities write or implement the transportation sections of their town plans and conducting three road erosion inventories in support of the Municipal Road General Permit (MRGP). This program supports water quality with improved road infrastructure.

### **Objective #4: Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans**

ACRPC conducted 32 separate data collection activities for VTrans. Work included collecting "Complete Streets" data, traffic counts, Park and Ride Counts and pedestrian counts.

### **Objective #5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education**

ACRPC assisted in coordinating public outreach for VTrans projects affecting ten communities. ACRPC utilized the TAC meetings to provide opportunities for three VTrans staff presentations, one presentation from TVT, and a public review of the I-89 planning study.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPC's also assist with updating floodplain bylaws, creating FEMA-qualified hazard mitigation plans, coordinating updates to municipal emergency plans and providing as needed assistance in special circumstances and declared disasters.

- 10 of the twenty-one municipalities in the Region (52%) currently have a hazard mitigation plan (LHMP) either adopted or under review.
- Nineteen of twenty-one municipalities in the Region (90%) currently have an annually updated local emergency management plan (LEMP).
- ACRPC worked with Bristol and Cornwall to update and incorporate river corridor and flood hazard maps into their town plans.
- Staff attended the Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference to learn and bring local perspective to the discussions.
- ACRPC hosted trainings for local officials in hazardous materials reporting, local emergency management, and incident command systems. Each workshop improved local communities and agencies' ability to respond to disasters.

- Staff assisted in the coordination of the Addison County Emergency Planning Committee. At monthly meetings, ACRPC helped coordinate a regional response to disasters and identification of hazardous materials stored throughout the county.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis services in support of their projects.

- ACRPC's mapping program supports nearly every planning function it performs. Every municipal plan, enhanced energy plan or zoning bylaw created contains maps produced by ACRPC.
- ACRPC created new and updated existing maps for town plan updates in the towns of Orwell, Salisbury, and Cornwall and provided technical support for Salisbury's downtown village designation application.
- ACRPC supported community energy planning efforts in Shoreham and New Haven.
- ACRPC continued to use its award winning FREDI app it created to support the data gathering efforts its transportation program is undertaking to map hydrologically connected roadways within the Region and improved a similar app previously developed that collects and provides culvert data. The apps, built on an existing software platform, allow for the quick and efficient collection, storage and transmission of road and culvert data collected to improve water quality.
- ACRPC used the FREDI culvert app to conduct culvert inventories in Ripton, Whiting, and Lincoln. These data will be shared with municipalities to help prioritize culvert repair and replacement.
- ACRPC created outreach and planning maps for the Addison County Relocalization Network, the Towns of Bristol, Lincoln, Middlebury, Monkton, and New Haven to support community events, transportation planning, and natural resource inventories.
- ACRPC created interactive online GIS maps and dashboards for the Addison County Riverwatch Collaborative and Vermont Coverts.
- ACRPC used spatial analysis and created map products to support Maple Broadband's high-level design and planning efforts (see Special Projects).
- ACRPC developed or updated regional databases of municipal facilities, transportation networks, and natural resources (e.g, zoning, state designations, trails, culverts, etc).

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- ACRPC worked with four municipalities to regionally approve enhanced energy plans. within its region to help them revise their local energy plans (Whiting, Bristol, Vergennes, New Haven and Shoreham) and control their own energy future. Each new plan includes all data necessary to satisfy state requirements for enhanced energy plans. Plans meeting these goals will receive a higher level of deference from the Public Utilities Commission. ACRPC continues to support previous town energy plans (Salisbury Monkton, Vergennes and Panton) and work with them through the local designation process towards adoption.

- ACRPC supported many solar arrays in the Region that met the criteria it created for siting solar facilities.
- ACRPC created a series of report cards for towns with Enhanced Energy Plans rating how each town had done in implementing their Plan's goals.
- ACRPC organized roundtables for municipal energy coordinators and energy committees, and provided support for Button-Up Vermont activities and materials distribution.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the required watershed basin plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning efforts and regulations, which result in water quality improvements, riverine habitat and safer growth management decisions.

- ACRPC continued its support of and participation as part of the Addison County River Watch Collaborative (ACRWC). ACRWC provides water quality sampling in 6 watersheds and submits samples to the state lab. ACRPC hosts the ACRWC meetings and sampling events, maintains the website with current sampling data for the public, and supports presentations to targeted community boards and "kitchen water chats."
- ACRWC helped develop public outreach documents for the ACRWC including summary sheets of Middlebury River, New Haven River, and Lewis Creek, as well as information regarding recent contaminant levels at 8 observed recreational sites.
- ACRPC supported a 3-Acre Permit funding application for Broadview Estates through a WUV DIBG grant.
- ACRPC is working with the ACRWC to improve public access to its current and historical water quality data and reports through an updated (currently draft) online dashboard.
- ACRPC works regularly with its municipal members to improve water quality data for their local road systems. See Transportation Planning.
- ACRPC was chosen to serve as the Clean Water Service Provider for the Otter Creek Basin by ANR. In gearing up for that work it has reached out to many of the local watershed planning groups and has worked with ANR to develop the rules and guidelines for the program.
- ACRPC worked with ANR's Basin Planner to help add projects to the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

RPCs Work on a number of unique projects each year. Examples at ACRPC include:

- ACRPC continued to support the work of the Addison County Communications Union District, dba Maple Broadband, which it helped to create in the prior year. Maple Broadband's goal is to bring broadband services to underserved populations throughout the county. ACRPC helped Maple recruit 20 towns in its region, wrote several successful grants for Maple Broadband and continued to help with its feasibility study and business plan.
- ACRPC began work with VTrans and the City of Vergennes to study and find solutions for the issues created by heavy truck traffic within the City Center. The Planning and Environmental Linkages Study ("PELS") now underway intends to take a hard look at the land use planning impacts of any

proposed solutions to ensure that the transportation design component of the project increases the overall economic vitality of all areas studied.

- ACRPC served as the municipal project manager on three sidewalk/shared use path improvement projects within the Towns of Middlebury, Vergennes and Lincoln. These projects enhance popular walking routes that connect downtowns with other portions of town. The Exchange Street Sidewalk project is in the process of procuring rights of way. The Vergennes sidewalk is in its environmental review and the Lincoln sidewalk planning study looks at connections between the village and school.
- ACRPC worked with the Town of New Haven, Vermont Historic Preservation, and VTrans to coordinate efforts around moving the historical New Haven Train Depot building. This included administrative, technical, and project management support for procuring funding, facilitating meetings about the Depot's new location and possible use, writing and posting RFPs, and identifying project needs (e.g., permitting, zoning, utility line management) and an approximate timeline.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

ACRPC receives most of its funding through grants, and through a performance-based contract with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding. For the 2021 fiscal year, ACRPC's total revenue of approximately \$778,000 dollars was derived from 94 percent state and federal grants supporting regional and local projects, and 6 percent from town assessments. While percentages may vary slightly from year to year, the year was typical of ACRPC revenue.

Virtually all of the ACRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures. This means that the ACRPC has limited control over how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through town assessments and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development ("ACCD") are the exception, which makes these funding streams particularly important. Such funding provides the Region with the greatest latitude to respond to the Region's needs. Town assessments, and the funding received through the ACRPC's performance contract with ACCD, are also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants ACRPC receives enables the commission to work with represented towns on improvements in sectors such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant).

ACRPC has an audit on an annual basis. For FY 2020, its most recent audit, there were no significant findings, which is the same result found in audits conducted in past years. ACRPC's audit for FY 2021 will be completed by December 2021.

## **'AT WORK' MAP**

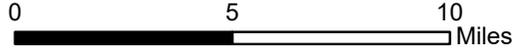
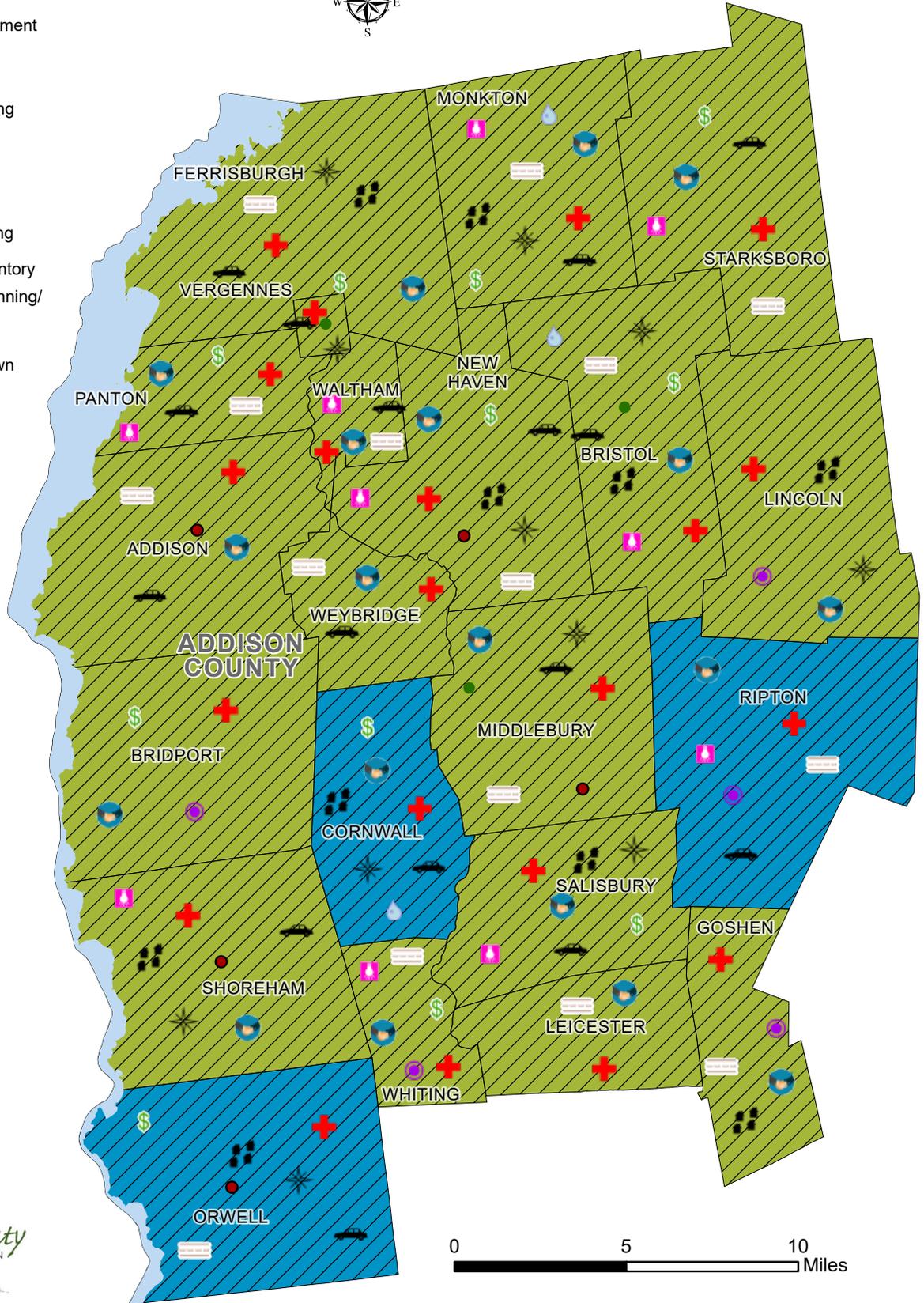
The map depicting the range of services provided by the ACRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# ACRPC at Work: FY 2021

**Projects**

- Bridge and Culvert Inventory
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning
- Grant Writing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Road Erosion Inventory
- Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

- Designation**
- Designated Downtown
  - Designated Village
- Municipal Bylaw Status**
- Adopted
- Municipal Plan Status**
- Current
  - Expired



# Bennington County Regional Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) was created by the seventeen towns and villages it serves, and works with an on behalf of those municipalities to build strong, resilient, and sustainable communities, to foster economic prosperity, and to promote a high quality of life for residents of the region. This mission is accomplished through direct planning and community development assistance to town and village governments, through preparation and implementation of regional plans and studies, and through synergistic working relationships with local and regional organizations. The BCRC works cooperatively with local governments to establish and advance regional cohesiveness, actively advocates for adherence to adopted regional policies, and facilitates effective communication between local, state, and federal levels of government.

The BCRC maintains an office in an historic building in the center of Bennington's downtown. The Commission is overseen by municipally appointed commissioners representing each of the member towns and villages as well as eight commissioners representing specific interests such as economic development, housing, transportation, and public health. The BCRC employs eight full-time and one part-time staff and supervises a full-time Americorps VISTA. Principal program areas with assigned staff responsibilities include: municipal and regional planning, transportation, environmental/water quality planning, community and economic development, emergency management planning, energy planning, and solid waste planning and management.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

Regional Planning Commissions act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and regular consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, assisting with implementation of local development review boards, support for development in downtowns and village centers, and meeting new requirements for economic development, forest fragmentation prevention, and flood resiliency planning. Municipal plans and regulations that are clear and up to date are essential in smooth state and local permitting. The BCRC's work in municipal planning is supported through municipal and regional planning funds, payments from member towns and villages, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map (attached); highlights include:

- The BCRC worked with the Village of Manchester and Glastenbury to develop updates to their municipal plans. The same plans were amended to be consistent with "Act 174" energy planning standards. All plans are reviewed for conformance with statutory requirements, and implementation projects are clearly delineated. BCRC received special funding to draft amendments to the municipal plans of Glastenbury, Woodford, and Sandgate to comply with "Act 171" requirements for forest block connectivity.
- BCRC staff worked closely with Pownal on comprehensive revisions to its land use regulations, including provisions to encourage mixed uses and higher density housing in designated areas and to promote economic development where applicable. BCRC assisted with a targeted revision of the Glastenbury zoning bylaw to improve compliance with statutory requirements and other special issues. The BCRC also worked with the Town of Bennington to revise its land

use regulations for districts within its designated growth center to rely more heavily on form-based standards and to encourage development patterns more in keeping with Town Plan goals. The Bennington project included all of the standards and application materials needed for a Neighborhood Development Area designation.

- BCRC completed a regional housing bylaw study of all town and village land use regulations to identify potential ways to support more housing and mixed-use development in village centers and surrounding neighborhoods. The recommendations are being informed by the recently published ACCD/CNU Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods. In addition, the BCRC partnered with UVM to host an internship project that used remote GIS data to assess bylaw non-conformance in nine village areas in the region. The analyses revealed consistently high rates of nonconformance between existing development and current dimensional standards in village areas.
- The BCRC continued to support downtown, village center, and neighborhood development area designations, including the renewal of two village centers in Shaftsbury. Those designations have been particularly helpful in supporting alignment of planning goals and local regulations and in securing critical historic preservation and downtown/village center tax credits and grants in Bennington (Putnam Block redevelopment), Manchester Village (restoration of former public library to be repurposed as a restaurant), and Rupert (preservation and reuse of the historic Sheldon Store and new sidewalk).
- As continuation of participation in the community-led “Arlington Area Renewal Project” in Arlington, Sandgate, and Sunderland, the BCRC has participated in discussions about village wastewater options. A presentation from BCRC explored the potential for form-based zoning standards to improve infill opportunities in Arlington’s village centers in light of bylaw nonconformance analysis findings.
- Following completion of a planning study that examined a key block of underutilized and vacant properties in the center of downtown Bennington, the BCRC has continued to work with the town and with a private redevelopment group to complete plans for redevelopment. Construction for phase I of that project was finalized with commercial and residential occupancy on its way to completion. The BCRC is supporting development of the next two phases of this project, consisting of new commercial and residential buildings along Main Street and Washington Street.
- BCRC was contracted by Southwestern Vermont Health Care Realty to develop a campus reuse study for the former Southern Vermont College campus in Bennington. A community trails report and substantial public outreach are components of this work.
- BCRC is project managing a reuse study for the recently closed Energizer industrial facility in the Town of Bennington. The project was kicked off in spring of 2021 and is focusing on redevelopment scenarios for mixed uses and affordable housing in clustered, historic downtown buildings.
- BCRC staff responded to requests for assistance with various planning and zoning issues in all 17 of its member municipalities and conducted training for municipal officials on a variety of topics including: procedures for land use administrators, boards, and commissions; planning for housing and introduction to housing programs and organizations; climate change considerations for local communities; local food and agriculture in the Bennington region; regional economic development initiatives; biomass heating systems; village center pedestrian planning; use of local plans in the Section 248 process; visualization tools for land use planning;

local implementation of tactical basic plans; the Transportation and Climate Initiative; and energy efficiency incentives. Representatives from each municipality attended at least one of the training sessions. A special training on zoning changes for housing informed by the ACCD/CNU Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods publication was held for all municipalities.

- BCRC has updated its website format and content to better serve its municipalities. An interactive events calendar, up-to-date meeting agendas and minutes, and centralized source for municipal and regional documents are maintained to keep commissioners engaged in the BCRC's work. In addition, the BCRC has continued to update a new regional COVID-19 Response resource section on the website with background data and information as well as links related to: municipal resources, food security, economic and business support programs and grants, school and childcare issues, community and individual needs, and volunteer opportunities.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING**

RPC's coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

The Bennington County Regional Plan, most recently updated in 2017, is a significant resource document for local officials, organizations, and residents of the region. The Regional Plan includes extensive information about the region and its communities, specific policies to guide growth and development, and direct links to numerous sources of information on a wide variety of topics.

An important aspect of this plan update was inclusion of closer ties between the plan and various topic-specific plans developed by the BCRC. The plan includes implementation guidance supported by specific recommendations for projects and improvements that will benefit the region. Implementation tasks are identified in each of several key areas: comprehensive municipal planning (specific schedules for assistance with plan and bylaw updates and training), regulatory review (guidelines for participation in Act 250 and Section 248 reviews – BCRC participated actively in two Act 250 and six Section 248 hearings during the year), transportation (a list of priority projects and initiatives and links to action-oriented plans), environmental planning (identification of water quality improvement projects, partner organizations and key areas of focus), community and economic development (including the Southern Vermont Economic Development Strategy), emergency management (grant funding obtained to support specific municipal hazard mitigation planning work), energy planning (a comprehensive regional energy plan with policies and targeted actions for conservation and efficiency as well as renewable energy resource maps and data for each town in the region), and solid waste (a variety of education, outreach, and regulatory actions designed to help meet waste reduction and recycling targets).

Improved regional planning for community and economic development has been a key component of the BCRC's work over the past several years. The BCRC now carries out the work of the Regional Development Corporation (RDC). Implementation of local and regional development plans has been greatly facilitated by this integrated approach that links local land use planning and business development activities and that facilitates engagement with other economic development interests across Southern Vermont. The BCRC worked with municipalities and economic development

organizations in the Northshire and Southshire, as well as with the RPC and RDC in Windham County, to move toward a consistent regional approach to planning for economic development. The BCRC and its partner organizations across southern Vermont have initiated several projects directed specifically toward providing technical and grant support for businesses and local governments impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **BROWNFIELDS**

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, and increase housing opportunities.

The BCRC applied for and was awarded a new US EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for the 2018 through 2021 fiscal years. The Commission has identified sites that would benefit from assessments, provided information on brownfield redevelopment, and monitored redevelopment of sites that have been assessed in the past. BCRC staff advises owners of several potential brownfield sites in anticipation of future Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments. The BCRC coordinates a Brownfields committee that prioritizes sites for assessment and clean-up planning.

Brownfield sites participating in Phase I or II assessments, corrective action plans, or other follow-up work during the past year include:

- Tuttle and adjacent Bennington Brush properties in Downtown Bennington: completed Phase I and II – properties sold; Corrective Action Plan developed and approved. Redevelopment potential for retail, residential uses.
- Putnam Block (Bennington Downtown) – Corrective Action Plan being implemented to pursue mixed use redevelopment of historic downtown block. A project-specific \$500,000 Brownfield redevelopment grant was awarded for Phase II of this project.
- Pownal Transfer Station/Landfill: Phase I E.S.A. was performed on behalf of a potential solar developer. The BCRC also paid for the development of the proposal to perform a Phase II E.S.A., and assisted the town in applying for a grant to pay for the Phase II E.S.A.
- Arlington Church Property: Phase I and II E.S.A. to facilitate acquisition of this property, located near the center of Arlington Village, by a local nonprofit organization. Future reuse is expected to include cultural and recreational facilities for the community.
- The BCRC provided funding and project management, in cooperation with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, for a petroleum assessment at the former St. Joseph’s College in Rutland, where the community is investigating options for reuse of certain buildings and land.
- Energizer Factory Complex – This facility recently ceased manufacturing operations and has become available for redevelopment. The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation secured a Brownfields area-wide planning grant that the Town and the BCRC have combined with other grant funds to complete a study and assessment of reuse potential. BCRC is project managing this ongoing reuse study.
- Ideal Fuels, the Benmont Mill lot, Bradford Commons, and the Johnson Controls lot - all in Bennington’s Growth Center – as well as the Manchester Powerhouse have been identified as potential future assessment sites.

## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with effective planning functions. RPCs work with towns and Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

The BCRC has maintained a staffed program in community and economic development for several years. Successful economic development planning in both the Southshire (Bennington area) and Northshire (Manchester area) have made integration of the region's RDC with the BCRC the most efficient and compelling strategy. The BCRC now implements the RDC's annual work plan. This partnership, together with BCRC's active role in redevelopment projects, has allowed for the hiring of additional staff, supporting economic development initiatives throughout the region and in cooperation with the Windham Region through the Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone initiative. Highlights from the past year include:

- Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone: The BCRC built capacity for regional economic development work by establishing relationships with key businesses, institutions, and individuals. The BCRC Regional Initiatives/CEDS Committee integrates regional needs and opportunities into the Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (SoVT CEDS), recently completed in cooperation with the Windham Region. The BCRC has helped identify regional priority projects based on the CEDS and continues to support implementation of the SoVermont Sustainable Marketing and Recruitment program. The CEDS was updated in the last year to incorporate the impacts that COVID has had on the regional economy and strategies for recovery.
- The BCRC has continued to work with the Bennington Redevelopment Group, the Town of Bennington, and BCIC to undertake a major development project involving historic buildings and vacant land in the center of Bennington's downtown. An innovative funding strategy has leveraged private investment, tax credits, a Community Development Block Grant, and a Tax Increment Financing District to underpin the project. Construction of Phase I (restoration and redevelopment of the historic buildings) was completed in the past year and planning continued for new mixed use and residential structures (Phases II and III). As noted above, the BCRC has facilitated similar efforts involving planning for redevelopment at two additional sites in Bennington; BCRC has drafted a reuse study for the recently closed Southern Vermont College campus near downtown Bennington and is finishing up one for the soon to be vacated Energizer manufacturing facility.
- The BCRC is continuing its efforts to support workforce development through regular consultation with businesses and educational institutions, conducting outreach and educational programs through its regional Workforce & Education Committee.
- The strong emphasis on state designation programs described above has been used to support economic development planning and initiatives in several communities, including Arlington where a key focus has been the need for additional housing for the community's growing workforce. The need for new/improved infrastructure, especially wastewater, has been the focus of attention in Arlington and several other village centers. Recent BCRC-supported

designations have enabled acquisition of over \$300,000 in grant and tax credit funding for redevelopment projects in Bennington, Rupert, and Manchester Village.

- Additional economic development grant support resulted in substantial funding to local communities for development of affordable housing and downtown redevelopment projects.
- BCRC staff have met with existing businesses to understand and support job retention and growth, and have facilitated communication between prospective new businesses (relocation and new start-ups) and local and state officials.
- The BCRC has supported the formation and work of the Southern Vermont Communication Union District, providing fiscal management and staff support for efforts to expand access to broadband in rural areas throughout the region.
- COVID-19 response work has included outreach and support for more than 400 businesses; to date, over \$5.4 million in state economic recovery grants have been received by area businesses and nonprofits. BCRC disseminated information on recovery programs through local media and board meetings. BCRC hosted a roundtable discussion with Congressman Welch and co-organized a regional recovery forum with the Vermont Council on Rural Development.
- To support new and prospective Vermonters in relocating to the state, BCRC staff have expanded the reach and infrastructure of the Vermont Welcome Wagon Project and Stay 2 Stay program in southern Vermont.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through a contract with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement. The past year's accomplishments as they relate to the BCRC's TPI work program include:

### **Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

- The BCRC's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met regularly during the past year. The TAC consists of 17 members. Principal functions of the TAC are to provide input on specific projects and to prioritize projects in several program areas. BCRC staff and the TAC participated in and provided critical input on the pilot launch of the new VTrans statewide project prioritization system, VSPS2.
- Provided direct outreach to each town and village regarding codes and standards, hazard mitigation planning, erosion control and stormwater management, and related funding and financial considerations.
- Participated in development of projects involving bicycle and pedestrian system connectivity and streetscape improvements in Bennington, Arlington, Manchester, Pownal, and Dorset. Led an effort to identify impediments to timely development of bike-ped projects and to identify solutions.
- BCRC staff has participated in planning for intersection safety improvements, with a special focus on the VT 67A corridor in the area of Bennington College and Kocher Drive/Route 7

intersection in Bennington, the Route 313 and Warm Brook Road intersection in Arlington, the Route 30 and East Manchester Rd in Manchester, and VT 7A in Manchester Village.

- The BCRC conducted outreach to encourage participation in the annual Way to Go commuter challenge.
- The BCRC is participating in implementation of the Transportation Resilience Planning Tool by applying those techniques to the Batten Kill watershed.

### **Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

- The BCRC continued to work with VTrans, local officials, regional economic development organizations, and local businesses to support the new “Shires Connector” bus link to the Amtrak station in Rensselaer from Manchester and Bennington, and has initiated conversations with Green Mountain Community Network and several Northshire towns regarding service needs and opportunities in rural communities.
- The BCRC participated in the review of a major Act 250 project that would introduce improved transportation infrastructure and increased traffic in a rural area of Manchester.
- The BCRC has worked to integrate energy plans with TPI program objectives and is coordinating a statewide effort to support implementation of local and regional energy plans. In addition, the BCRC has organized events focusing on electric vehicles (cars and bikes) and automated vehicle technology.
- The BCRC has participated in discussions of the Transportation Climate Initiative and helped coordinate with state agencies and other regional planning commissions.

### **Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

- Provided support for Municipal Road stormwater management and flood resilience planning and implementation in most municipalities.
- Bennington: Ongoing planning and project management for the Willowbrook-Applegate Path in Bennington, the “Ninja Trail” design-build project, and the Benmont Streetscape improvements project in Bennington. The Kocher Drive-US 7 crossing and multi-use pathway project was advanced to construction and completed. Convened regular meetings of a local Bennington Bike Committee to promote biking culture, education, policy, and infrastructure.
- Manchester: Participation as a steering team member and technical resource for the Manchester bikepath project.
- Manchester Village: Assessment of the VT 7A/West Road/Seminary Avenue intersection, while also outlining a process to complete a walkable village center plan.
- Dorset: BCRC staff has helped integrate elements of a planning study into a Route 30 paving project and a new town-funded walkway extending south from Dorset Village. The BCRC also is working with the Town to extend the Manchester bikepath to the Dorset School and to identify appropriate improvements to extend the link further along Route 30 to Dorset Village.
- Arlington: Managing the construction phase of a safe walking route to link the Arlington Recreation Park to the Village Center and the Arlington Public Schools.
- BCRC staff completed a scoping report on a potential a multi-use path along a historic trolley line from Bennington to Williamstown, MA. Commission staff worked cooperatively with the towns and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Historic alignments, ownership, and environmental issues have been documented.

Performance Indicator		BCRC	Notes
	<b>Objective 1</b>		
	<b>Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities</b>		
A	# of TAC meetings held		5
B	# of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning		14
C	# of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning		17
D	# of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans		8
	<b>Objective 2</b>		
	<b>Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning</b>		
E	# of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)		1
F	# of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation		2
G	# of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation		0
H	# of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers		2
I	# of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation		1
J	# of regions participating in Project Prioritization		1
	<b>Objective 3</b>		
	<b>Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities</b>		
K	# of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually		0
L	# of municipalities assisted with transportation related grants		6
M	% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance		50%
N	# of municipal transportation inventories conducted		1
O	# of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken		2
P	# of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan		3
Q	# of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other		4
	<b>Objective 4</b>		
	<b>Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans</b>		
R	# of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans		4
	<b>Objective 5</b>		
	<b>Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education</b>		
	BCRC promoted the Vtrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Program and assisted 3 municipalities with their grant applications.		

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff support to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- The BCRC continued to support municipalities in developing and updating Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs). BCRC staff worked one-on-one with municipalities that requested extra assistance and sent out individual ERAF reports to each municipality. The ERAF Reports highlighted the need for LEMP updates, as well as other ERAF requirements, in order to receive more state funding for public infrastructure damage after a declared disaster.

- The BCRC provides support for development and updates to local hazard mitigation plans. The BCRC assisted with preliminary reviews or updates to three local hazard mitigation plans. Flood resiliency and stormwater actions, assessments of threats from forest insect pests, and economic development planning relevant to hazard mitigation are considered as part of the planning process.
- The BCRC provided assistance with revisions and updates to flood hazard area planning documents and regulations through plan and bylaw updates; municipalities supported included Glastenbury and Pownal.
- Recently, BCRC assisted in the transition from the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) to the Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC). We held informational meetings about the transition with the Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) Regional Coordinator, Emergency Management Directors (EMDs), and those previously part of the LEPC. BCRC staff also attended state meetings discussing the transition from LEPC to REMC. Ongoing support for the REMC will continue to be provided by BCRC staff.
- BCRC staff is on the local MRC Committee and attends meetings regularly.
- The BCRC has been activated as local liaisons several times during the year and has assisted towns with severe damage with the process of applying for FEMA funding.
- Provided coordination for regional COVID-19 response. Developed and publicized a COVID-19 section to the BCRC website, provided assistance to municipalities, nonprofits, and other critical service providers in the areas of state pandemic guidelines, training opportunities, and grant funding. BCRC maintained up-to-date on COVID-19 happenings and relayed important information to EMDs.
- Other focus areas during the past year included: distributing emergency management training information, scheduling emergency management related trainings, coordinating and supporting Emergency Management Directors and municipal officials with assistance and guidance, and COVID-19 support and information sharing.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

The BCRC uses its geographic information systems capability to produce maps and conduct analyses in support of virtually all of its programs. RPCs also provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

Particularly valuable GIS projects completed during the past year have included:

- Renewable energy resource maps showing locations with high potential for renewable energy development as well as areas with significant constraints to development for the municipalities of Glastenbury and the Village of Manchester.
- River corridor mapping to support resiliency planning including depiction of new flood hazard areas, and maps to support watershed planning and development of river corridor regulations.
- New maps to support municipal plan updates in Manchester Village. Mapping of proposed adjustments to zoning bylaw revisions were completed for Pownal and Bennington.
- Various maps and geographic analyses were completed in support of the Bennington downtown redevelopment project, and to support assessment of community use and reuse of the former Southern Vermont College campus and downtown Bennington Energizer facility.

- Maps to support recreation park improvements in Bennington, development and improvement of bike-ped facilities/systems in Bennington, Pownal, and Arlington, and maps of regional outdoor recreation facilities including the BATS trail network.
- Mapping of municipal bridges, culverts, and road segments related to stormwater management and municipal road general permits.
- Village center, downtown, and growth center maps to support designations and renewals.
- Assessments of demographic and business trends to support Southern Vermont Economic Development Zone programs. Economic and community development staff now use ArcGIS Business Analyst and GeoPlanner software to analyze commerce and commuter trends.
- UVM interns were supported to develop GIS assessments of zoning bylaw compliance in village centers and to document existing sidewalk infrastructure throughout the region.

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- The BCRC has received an allocation of funds to support implementation of local and regional energy plans. Initial efforts focused on support for local energy committees, assisting with weatherization events, including “Button-Up” and “Window Dressers” programs, coordination with Drive Electric Vermont, and providing staff support to NeighborWorks of Western Vermont in their Bennington County office to expand the reach of their Heat Squad thermal efficiency programs.
- The BCRC has helped a majority of the municipalities in the region adopt enhanced energy plans, including the Village of Manchester in the past year. These plans are used to guide local energy efficiency efforts and to represent municipalities’ positions on applications for new generation projects before the Public Utility Commission. The BCRC issued affirmative Determinations of Energy Compliance to municipalities when the plans were found to be consistent with Act 174 planning standards. The BCRC also continues to provide new energy-related information to towns and villages as it is developed. For example, data on local energy usage and efficiency activities were provided to each community as annual updates were received from Efficiency Vermont and other organizations.
- The BCRC organized regular meetings of RPC energy/climate coordinators and planning staff, and helped the Department of Public Service organize a series of regional forums as it works to develop a new state comprehensive energy plan. BCRC staff also participated in meetings and workshops held by the state Climate Council.
- The BCRC reviewed and commented on proposals for new renewable energy development in the region and participated in Section 248 proceedings. The regional energy committee reviewed several solar projects with a combined capacity of approximately 3 MW. The BCRC’s energy and development review committees met with developers and invited local officials to participate in discussions of possible new projects.
- Support has been provided to towns and villages seeking to establish and maintain designated village centers, downtowns, and neighborhood development areas, to develop or expand

needed infrastructure to enable energy-efficient walkable communities, and to revise land use regulations in keeping with new statewide initiatives for regulatory reform that encourages more diverse and higher density housing.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Assisted VT ANR with outreach on the Basin 1 Tactical Plan and integrated recommendations into local hazard mitigation plans, projects, and land use plans and regulations.
- Identified actions related to river protection outlined in adopted Hazard Mitigation Plans and integrated that information into ANR's projects database for future funding allocation.
- Prepared tables characterizing flood and fluvial erosion hazard mitigation projects and drafted language for use of the tables in resiliency elements of municipal plans.
- Created and updated town river corridor maps for the Batten Kill, Walloomsac, Hoosic, and Mettawee watersheds; assisted with the development and adoption of municipal river corridor regulations.
- BCRC staff attended monthly meetings of the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance and the Bennington County Conservation District and assisted with their education and water quality improvement projects. Supported work on a project to assess and remediate obstacles to passages for aquatic organisms in Dorset, North Bennington, Shaftsbury and the Green River watershed in Sandgate and Arlington.
- The BCRC worked with the Batten Kill Watershed Alliance, Bennington County Conservation District, and Trout Unlimited to identify and treat invasive species in selected areas of the Batten kill watershed and to identify areas in need of revegetation. Plantings of native trees were completed along key river segments on the Metawee, Batten Kill, Green River, Walloomsac, and Hoosic Rivers, with additional sites identified and approved for future plantings.
- The BCRC worked directly with most towns and villages in the region to identify, implement, and verify completion of "Grants-in-Aid" water quality improvements to hydrologically connected segments of local highways.
- The BCRC coordinated stormwater master planning projects and completed several municipal road erosion inventories.
- Coordinated planning for remediating landslides on the Green River in Sandgate and the Hoosic River in Pownal.
- Coordinated the removal of several downed trees in the Batten Kill which posed a serious threat to public safety. Coordinated meetings of watershed partners, state agencies, municipalities and private property owners to establish a protocol for future woody debris issues, addressing public safety while preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat and bank stabilization.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

The BCRC has developed programs in solid waste management and planning and healthy community design that have led to numerous special projects and ongoing actions. The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a change in priorities and practices in many BCRC programs, and a number of special

activities have been implemented specifically to address individual, municipal, and business impacts related to the crisis.

The BCRC has helped organize, developed a plan for, and provides staff support for a thirteen-town solid waste alliance. Some of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance's ongoing activities include:

- Holding three household hazardous waste collection events in the Alliance service area for residents and businesses of the 13 towns.
- Education and outreach to schools, municipalities, solid waste service providers, and the general public to increase recycling and organics management/composting and reduce levels of trash sent to landfills. BCRC assisted the Alliance in organizing residential composting workshops and in the sale of backyard compost bins and other items.
- Outreach to forty-five businesses in 2020 and 15 in 2021, including housing management companies, restaurants, retail businesses and others. Technical assistance was provided via phone, email, webinars and limited in-person meetings due to COVID-19 restrictions
- Outreach to 16 schools to assist with food diversion given COVID-19 restrictions. We also made assessments of current solid waste management and provided recommendations for improving recycling and organics management.
- Update of the SWIP, which was adopted by the BCSWA in 2020 and approved by VT ANR the same year. This replaces the original 2015 SWIP.
- Approval of a grant for an asphalt shingle depository at the Bennington Transfer Station to aid in recycling asphalt shingles. The facility will be operational by July 1, 2022.
- Approval of a grant for a permanent household hazardous waste facility at the Bennington Transfer Station. The facility will be operational by August 1, 2023.
- Production and distribution of a regular newsletter on solid waste issues and maintenance of a web page and Facebook page dedicated to solid waste information. In addition, we provide regular information on Front Porch Forum on waste reduction, food scrap diversion, and household hazardous waste events.
- Support for legislation to create extended producer responsibility programs to require manufacturers to pay for the costs of recycling packaging and for the collection and disposal of household hazardous waste.

COVID-19 Response activities have included:

- Updates of a comprehensive COVID-19 information section of the BCRC website.
- Facilitation of regional meetings to ensure that information on current state guidelines and opportunities are available to local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and residents.
- Distribution of information to municipal officials on changes to the open meeting law and other topics that affect the operation of local government.
- Outreach and technical support related to public assistance and grant opportunities. The BCRC's community and economic development division consulted with over 400 businesses since the start of the state of emergency. To date, \$5.4 million in state economic recovery grants have been received by area businesses and nonprofits

Other special projects pursued in cooperation with local community coalitions, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, and local governments in the past year have included:

- Participation in the Launch Team of the Bennington County Regional Prevention Partnership (RPP) to reduce substance misuse in youth and young adults. Contributions of BCRC staff have focused on interpretation of emergent commercial cannabis policies and implications for municipalities, production of a municipal health equity guide, and regular updates to the regional Health Planning Primer.
- Cooperated with a local developer and the Town of Bennington to procure grant funds to rehabilitate a large multifamily housing building in a distressed neighborhood and continued to support the regional medical center's Healthy Homes initiative, where vacant/abandoned homes are renovated and returned to support the community's need for in-town affordable single family homes.
- Worked to improve regional food systems. Specific activities have included work with Bennington College's food security initiative, support for establishing a regional regenerative food network, and participation in an effort to create a regional food hub and distribution center supported by renewable energy. Provided targeted VISTA/staff support to Bennington College to advance and support a sustainable and equitable food system in the Bennington region.
- Worked with municipal and nonprofit leaders to implement projects envisioned through a Promise Community grant. Specific projects included planning and development of a new downtown park, improvements to a neighborhood park, and assistance with development of new community center facilities at the town recreation center (recently completed).

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

Each program manager at the BCRC is responsible for work plan and budget development. The executive director/planning coordinator, financial director, and assistant director/economic development coordinator cooperate to ensure that all required tasks and reporting are completed and advance the Commission's mission. The BCRC reported total revenues of approximately \$1.379 million in FY 2021 and total expenditures of approximately \$1.288 million. The majority of revenues are derived from grants that support specific work programs. Municipal appropriations and a portion of funds allocated to the BCRC from the municipal and regional planning fund provide critical support and matching funds to all of the diverse program areas operated through the Commission.

The FY21 financial audit will be completed in September 2021 to confirm the accuracy of the BCRC's financial records.

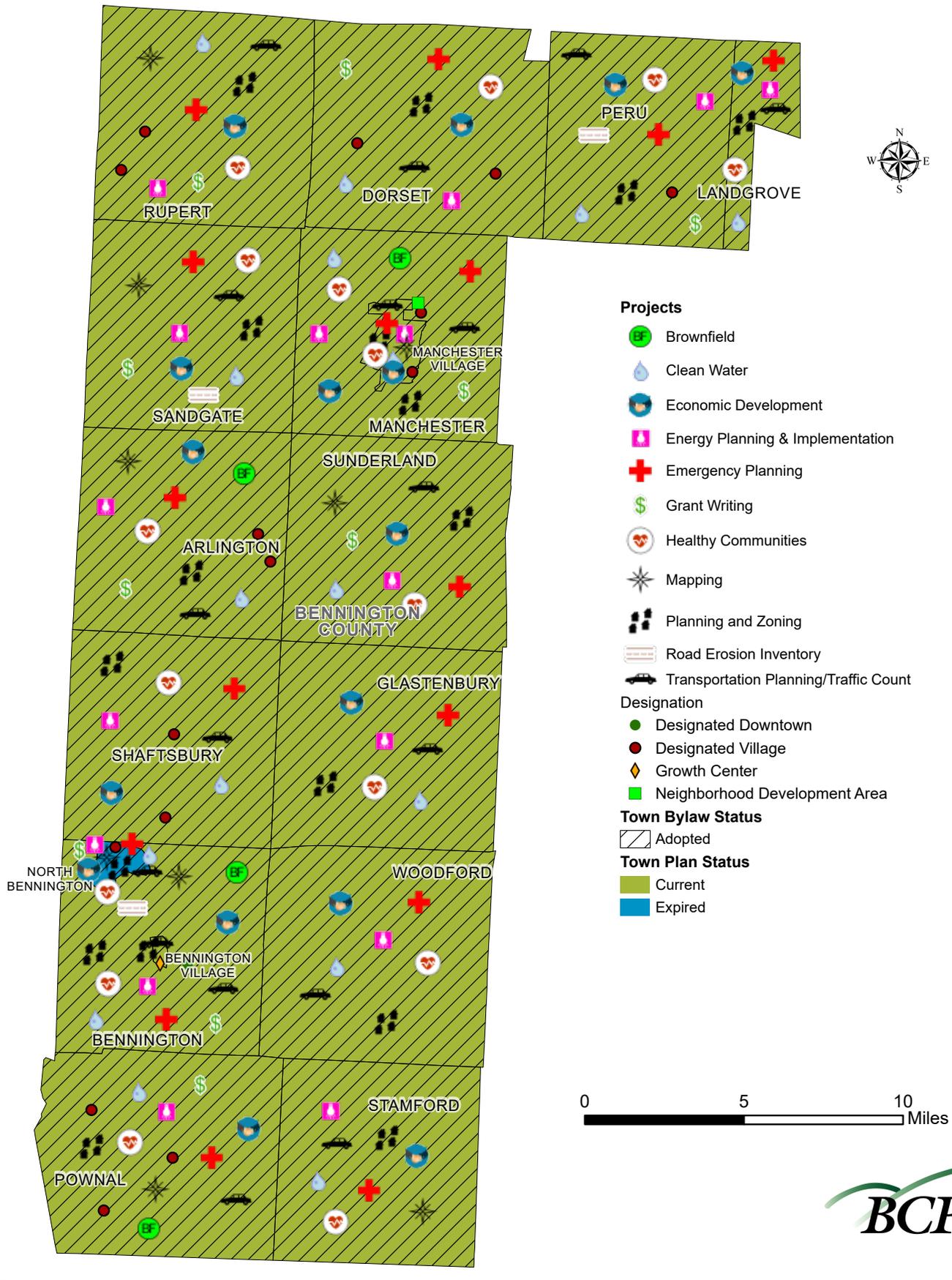
Regular meetings of the BCRC are held bimonthly with special meetings held during the intervening months. Most meetings include presentations and information on specific topics that support commissioners' understanding and involvement in regional planning projects. The BCRC also is responsible for organizing regular meetings of the regional RDC (Bennington County Industrial Corporation), the Regional Initiatives/CEDS Committee, the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance, the Bennington County Transportation Advisory Committee, the Southern Vermont Communications Union District, the Local Emergency Planning Committee, and a consortium of local energy committees. Several board members attend special trainings each year (e.g., financial management, regional economic development, housing, land use practices, energy planning, natural resource planning and environmental protection) to assist in the carrying out of their responsibilities to the organization. Staff

regularly attend trainings and participate in online webinars on a variety of topics specific to their program areas. Of course, most regular meetings, workshops, and conferences have moved to online platforms since the onset of the coronavirus state of emergency.

### **'AT WORK' MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the BCRC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# BCRC at Work: FY 2021



# Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission

## FY 21 Annual Report

Founded in 1967, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) leverages the power of people working together to assist its 23 member municipalities in providing effective local government and to work cooperatively to address regional issues. CVRPC is governed by representatives from the 20 municipalities of Washington County and Orange, Washington, and Williamstown in Orange County. Each legislative body selects a representative to the Commission.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

RPCs act as a cost effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education, enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Provided grant writing assistance to three municipalities for successful applications to amend zoning, develop a capital improvement plan, and engage the public in development of a new town plan.
- Assisted Orange with successful Village Center Designation application, providing property owners with access to resources and incentives for building investments.
- Assisted Middlesex and Moretown to amend their zoning regulations, reducing regulatory barriers to housing development in the village, increasing flood resilience, and protecting natural resources.
- Partnered with the Woodbury Planning Commission to develop a new town plan, including engaging its citizens through surveys, presentations, and events.
- Assisted Roxbury and coached Worcester on their Town Plan updates.
- Held a series of Planning & Zoning Forums for municipalities staff and Boards to build knowledge of current and emerging planning issues.
- Approved four municipal plans, issued three enhanced energy plan certifications, and confirmed four municipal planning processes.
- Assisted Middlesex to develop its first capital improvement program, leading to similar requests from Orange and Barre City.
- Assisted Cabot and Waitsfield with development of ash tree management plans. The arrival of Emerald Ash Borer means municipal costs for debris removal will increase substantially.

### **REGIONAL PLANNING**

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

In FY21, CVRPC continued efforts on the Regional Plan update, by gathering data across transportation, housing, and economic sectors.

CVRPC also focused on plan implementation. A sampling of activities includes:

- Amended the Regional Plan to update changes in Montpelier’s growth center boundary and to eliminate an outdated Housing Distribution Plan.
- Supported Preferred Site Designation for two properties to host new renewable energy generation technologies. The results will further the goals of the regional energy plan.
- Commented on a Waterbury subdivision Act 250 application to further regional forest integrity goals.
- Supported Berlin’s successful New Town Center designation, which promotes coordination of housing development and municipal infrastructure in mixed use areas. Outcomes will further regional land use and housing goals.
- Supported the Friends of Winooski to continue *Water Wise Woodlands*. This effort among Cabot, Marshfield, and Plainfield was initiated by CVRPC in 2017. It links forest integrity, private forest stewardship, and watershed resilience.
- Convened regional recreation facilities, providers, and businesses to share ideas and identify future collaborations to strengthen the region’s recreational economy and opportunities.
- Provided comments on the 2021 VELCO Long Range Transmission Plan.
- Creating an online web map to analyze how municipalities are aligning future land use with regional forest integrity efforts.

## **BROWNFIELDS**

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

In FY21, CVRPC did not have an active brownfields assessment grant. However, it continued to invest staff resources to work with owners and prospective developers by assisting them to leverage funding from other sources. Interest in brownfield redevelopment remains strong in Central Vermont.

## **ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- CVRPC lead data gathering for the West Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS). The CEDS is a partnership among RPCs and RDCs in Central Vermont, Rutland, Addison, and Chittenden Counties, and the Vermont Department of Economic Development. The effort focuses on pandemic recovery economic development strategies. An adopted CEDS can unlock future federal EDA investments for infrastructure development, job creation, and revolving loan funds.
- Coordinated with municipalities, regional non-profits, and CVEDC to set regional priorities for economic development projects. The projects will be included in the State Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and serve as priority projects for State investments.
- Wrote a USDA grant application for a financial feasibility study for the Plainfield Co-op.
- Provided administrative support to CVFiber, Central Vermont's Communications Union District. CVFiber plans to expand fast, affordable broadband in the region.
- Provided floodplain map and federal grant program information to Capstone Community Action to facilitate planning for an expansion of its childcare facility in Barre.
- Partnered with regional organizations to successfully encourage Census participation. Decennial Census counts affect the distribution of federal and state funding for 10 years.
- Developed a web map to show municipal and regional protections for forested areas and compared them with state data used for Act 171 (forest integrity) compliance. Drafted economic development policy language to assist municipalities to support forest economy businesses.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

### **Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

- Held 10 Transportation Advisory Committee meetings.
- Actively engaged 8 non-municipal TAC members in transportation planning.
- Actively engaged 21 municipalities in the Transportation Planning Initiative.
- Coordinated 4 activities with municipalities and VTrans.

### **Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

- Maintained a current regional transportation plans (within 8 years).
- Reviewed Act 250 applications; no comments required relating to transportation.
- Reviewed Section 248 applications; no comments required relating to transportation.
- Coordinated 4 activities in support of regional public transit providers.

- Participated in 4 VTrans committees.
- Participated in State Project Prioritization.

### **Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

- Assisted 5 municipalities with transportation related grants.
- Invested 55% of transportation budget on municipal technical assistance.
- Conducted 6 municipal transportation inventories.
- Completed 1 municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition study.
- Assisted 4 municipality with the transportation element of its municipal plan.
- Completed 8 road erosion inventories in support of the Municipal Roads General Permit.
- Designed a series of community conversations for Plainfield to facilitate decision making on the Route 2/Main Street intersection redesign.
- Assisted Berlin and Plainfield with successful Bicycle and Pedestrian grant applications; reviewed applications for five other municipal projects.
- Provided Municipal Project Management (MPM) services to Middlesex and Waitsfield.
- Assisted Waitsfield with completing the regional priority application for the VTrans Project Selection and Project Prioritization Project (VPSP2).

### **Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long Range Transportation Plans**

- Conducted 20 data collection activities specifically for VTrans (traffic counts, park and ride surveys, pedestrian counts, etc.)

### **Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education**

- Facilitated the Regional Elderly and Disabled Persons Advisory Committee (REDPAC) meetings to project transportation use and needs and to discuss service and rider engagement strategies; addressed COVID response and planning and surveyed older adults and people with disabilities about transit ridership satisfaction.

### **Highlights**

- Guided the Central Vermont Elders & Persons with Disabilities Committee through drafting its first annual work program.
- Supported 17 municipalities with implementation of Best Management Practices for the Municipal Grants in Aid program.
- Participated in the MyRide Advisory Committee, transitioning fixed route transit services to on-demand, flexible service that better meets rider needs.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in the preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Department of Public Safety, VTrans, the Agency of Natural Resources, and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs). RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the LEPCs and coordination among responders,

municipal officials, and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws, river corridor regulations, and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans. RPCs coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other federally and non-federally declared disasters. The RPCs are a source of technical support and information and provide coordination and collaboration for trainings, workshops and seminars, often in conjunction with partners.

- Hosted two Emergency Management Director (EMD) roundtables to foster understanding of the CARES program and share COVID after-action "lessons learned" and best practices.
- Wrote a successful FEMA grant application for a scoping study examining alternatives for a VTTrans-owned railroad trestle in Barre City. The trestle traps river debris, causing flooding.
- Assisted 23 municipalities with development of Local Emergency Management Plans.
- Assisted 4 towns with Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. 20 of the region's 23 municipalities (87%) have a FEMA-approved plan.
- Provided administrative assistance and fiscal agent services to Local Emergency Planning Committee 5.
- Represented RPCs on the VT Hazard Mitigation Grant Program application review committee.
- Provided State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) support by contacting towns to ascertain damages and by acting as supplemental staff to the SEOC Situational Awareness Unit.
- Supported municipal COVID-19 situational awareness by creating regular digests of local, state, and federal information and resources and a CVRPC COVID-19 webpage. Interviewed 23 municipalities to develop lessons learned and best practices for response and recovery.
- Completed a public Wi-Fi hot spot assessment of signal strength, speed, coverage, ease of login, and accessibility and facilitated improvements at three sites. Enhanced broadband accessibility increased access for school children and remote workers and improved the ability of health care institutions to provide medical care access.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

In addition to enhancing the RPC's work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of its projects.

- Produced custom maps for East Montpelier and Montpelier.
- Updated municipal plan maps for Roxbury, Woodbury, and Worcester and zoning maps for East Montpelier, Montpelier, and Waterbury.
- Updated web maps for Calais and East Montpelier to facilitate public access.
- Created a custom GIS web map for the Northfield Conservation Commission to assist with Town Forest planning.
- Updated GIS parcel data and tax maps for Duxbury and Middlesex to provide updated parcel information to the Listers, landowners, and parcel data users.
- Created emergency road map for East Montpelier for emergency service providers.

- Conducted site walk with the Orange Conservation Commission and developed GIS data collection app to map trails in the Town Forest. The trail mapping will enable the Town to apply for grants for trail construction.

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resources efforts. RPCs also work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Supported local energy committees implementing events related to Efficiency Vermont’s Button-Up campaign.
- Coordinated with local organizations and provided educational trainings and roundtables for energy committees and interested residents.
- Reviewed Barre Town and Northfield Municipal Plans and issued Determinations of Energy Compliance for both, providing these municipalities with substantial deference in Section 248 proceedings.
- Assisted Middlesex, Plainfield and Waitsfield in finalizing their Enhanced Energy Plans.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to design and implement stormwater mitigation projects and implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Advanced Vermont’s effort to reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain via the Winooski River Basin by:
  - Continuing stormwater mitigation final designs for one site in Moretown, four sites in Woodbury, and two sites in Calais.
  - Completing a stormwater mitigation construction project in Berlin that assists the Town with meeting the 3-acre General Stormwater Permit.
  - Engaging municipalities in public-private partnership work for complying with the new 3-acre stormwater regulation.
  - Initiating a stormwater construction project for treatment and gully restoration at The Health Center in Plainfield.
- Facilitated monthly Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) meetings to provide an educational forum and a basin planning work group for municipal officials.
- Developed an online GIS web application to depict stream monitoring locations and water quality results for Friends of the Mad River. The tool is enhancing public knowledge of water quality in the Mad River watershed.
- Engaged Woodbury and the CWAC in the development of the Lamoille Tactical Basin Plan.

- Assisted DEC to craft its Clean Water Service Provider Rule. CVRPC has been designated as the Winooski Basin Clean Water Service Provider by the Agency of Natural Resources.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

**Local Government Expense Reimbursement (LGER):** In partnership with the Department of Taxes, CVRPC served as statewide RPC lead for Local Government Expense Reimbursement (LGER) program assistance to municipalities. RPCs provided region-wide and 1:1 assistance to Units of Local Government, including training, coaching, expense identification, and reimbursement application assistance. Collectively, RPCs provided 1:1 targeted support to 159 units of local government, resulting in 153 eligible applications being submitted and reimbursement of \$7.9 million in COVID-related expenses.

### **Greater Barre Working Communities Challenge Facilitation:**

In Barre City, 55% of single female head of households with children lived below the federal poverty threshold in 2018, a sharp ~10% acceleration from 2016 and 2017. This same population in Washington County, the State of Vermont, and the United States, rose minimally during the same period, ending at 33%, 35%, and 38% respectively. CVRPC facilitated a multi-sector stakeholder team aimed at creating a nimble workforce development system that works seamlessly to achieve economic stability and improved quality of life for single moms for the mutual benefit of our businesses, communities, and future generations. The team used Appreciative Inquiry and a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) strategic planning process to identify what is working well and used it to strengthen organizations and initiatives. The team completed 29 interviews with a single mothers, employers, and representatives from education, social service organizations and service users, and the non-profit sector to inform its plan. CVRPC authored a successful grant application that resulted in an award of \$300,000 to implement the team's workforce system modernization ideas.

### **Transportation Resiliency Planning Tool (TRPT):**

At the request of VTrans, CVRPC served as statewide RPC lead to expand the TRPT statewide. This tool allows municipalities to better plan for infrastructure replacement from a flood resilience lens. RPCs incorporated local damage information and entered vulnerability and road importance data to assist VTrans with development of the TRPT tool. As specific watersheds are completed, RPCs assist municipalities to incorporate TRPT results into municipal plans and local hazard mitigation plans.

## **ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING**

The FY21 CVRPC budget was approximately \$1.13 million. Revenue sources included state and federal performance contracts, grants, and local assessments. Virtually all of the CVRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. This means CVRPC has limited flexibility in how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through municipal assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important. It gives us the greatest latitude to respond to the region's needs. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning,

community development, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires non-federal matching funds ranging from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Municipal assessments and regional planning funds passed through to CVRPC under a performance grant with the Department of Housing and Community Development provide matching funds.

CVRPC maintained its line of credit in 2021 due to a prevalence of product-based contracts and to mitigate the effects of delayed state payments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It maintains a Board-designated reserve fund, and a four-year plan for equipment and software upgrades and replacement.

CVRPC's annual audit will be completed in fall 2021. CVRPC has had no audit findings in recent years. It is considered a 'low risk' grantee by federal agencies. Staffing in 2021 included 9 employees: Executive Director, Senior Planners (3), Planners (2), Assistant Planner (2), and an Office Manager. CVRPC supported workforce development through use of three Planning Technicians for transportation and planning services. CVRPC contracts for accounting services.

In 2021, CVRPC adopted Rules of Procedure for four Committees, revised its Bylaws, and updated its Internal Controls and Administrative and Financial Procedures to operate in a fully-remote environment.



# Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is a political subdivision of the State created by the municipalities of Chittenden County in 1966 for the development of policies, plans and programs that address regional issues and opportunities in Chittenden County. Its vision is to be a pre-eminent, integrated regional organization that plans for healthy, vibrant communities, economic development, and efficient transportation of people and goods while improving the region's livability. The CCRPC serves as the region's federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and is responsible for comprehensive and collaborative transportation planning involving municipalities, state and federal agencies and other key stakeholders in Chittenden County. The CCRPC works to ensure implementation of the regional transportation plan and provides technical and planning assistance to its member municipalities, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

The CCRPC is governed by a 29-member board consisting of one representative from each of the County's 19 municipalities; transportation representatives from VTrans, Green Mountain Transit (GMT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Burlington International Airport (BIA), and a rail industry representative; and, at-large members representing the interests of agriculture, environmental conservation, business, and housing/socio-economic. The legislative body of each Chittenden County municipality selects its own representative and alternate. The full CCRPC selects the at-large representatives.

The CCRPC appreciates the continued opportunity to work with its municipal members to plan appropriately for the region's future to protect and improve the special quality of life that is shared throughout Chittenden County. In FY21, the CCRPC invested more than \$4.8 million in regional land use, transportation, emergency management, energy, natural resources, public engagement, training, and technical assistance. The program leverages more than \$4.3 million in Federal and State investment with \$250,400 in municipal dues and another \$242,500 in local match for specific projects—a 10:1 return on local investment.

### MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing new requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, municipal dues, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- **Town Plan Assistance:** Provided direct assistance to Underhill on finalizing their Town Plan (won't be approved until FY22). Created Town Plan maps for Westford. Worked with Shelburne on municipal plan and zoning recommendations for proper protection of forest integrity in accordance with Act 171, including a map viewer with natural resource and a locally developed habitat block layer.

- **Town Plan Approvals:** Approved the Comprehensive Plan, Enhanced Energy Plan and confirmed the planning process for Westford; and the Enhanced Energy Plan for Williston.
- **Zoning:** Continued with assistance to South Burlington on zoning-related assistance including drafting zoning amendments for natural resource protection and developed a related map viewer to illustrate the natural resources in the proposed amendments. CCRPC assisted Williston with their official map. CCRPC staff also began work in Bolton on zoning bylaw amendments from the Bolton Valley Master Plan. CCRPC assisted Milton with bylaw amendments recommended in previous fiscal years to address hurdles to additional housing development. CCRPC began a bylaw amendment project in Essex Junction to advance a pedestrian friendly landscape in the Village. Bylaw assistance was also provided to Huntington, Westford, and Richmond. CCRPC used parcel boundaries and building footprints to help identify parcels in Richmond that are not in conformance with setback regulations in some parts of the Village.. CCRPC began a Form Based Code project for Williston’s Taft Corners using transportation planning funds.
- **State Designation:** CCRPC aided Charlotte with their Village Center Designation including development of maps.
- **In-house Planning Services:** CCRPC provided zoning administration and development review assistance in St. George; and development review assistance in Richmond and Shelburne.
- **Training:** CCRPC provided the Charlotte Planning Commission with a housing presentation. Two Land Use Essentials trainings were held – Westford, Milton, Richmond, and Underhill Planning Commissioners and Development Review Boards were invited (14 participants from 3 municipalities). CCRPC also continued to host the 12-month webinar series from the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycling Professionals for municipalities and regional partners.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- **ECOS Plan Implementation:** CCRPC continues to implement its [2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan](#) which combines the regional plan, comprehensive economic development strategy, and metropolitan transportation plan, as reflected here in this report. CCRPC implements the Plan through collective impact relationships and projects with the GBIC, Department of Health, United Way, UVM Medical Center, UVM, our member municipalities and many other partners. As an example, we’ve implemented Strategy #2 (Strive for 80% of new development in areas planned for growth, which amounts to 15% of our land area) through the zoning projects mentioned above, permit legislation, and planned transportation investments in those places resulting in 87% of residential growth in these areas (2019 5-year average). CCRPC used the ECOS Plan to evaluate applications and participate in Act 250 and Section 248 hearings.
- **ECOS Plan Annual Report and Indicators:** The 2020 ECOS Annual Report includes some of the data we report on annually, as well as indicators of disparities that have resulted from systemic racism in our nation and community, as well as indicators associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This intentional focus on race, equity, and the COVID-19 pandemic marks the commitment of the ECOS Leadership Team to address these challenges (<http://www.ecosproject.com/2020-annual-report>). The ECOS Scorecard hosts the ECOS

Partners' shared measurement and indicator system that monitors how well Chittenden County is doing relative to achieving our shared ECOS goals.

(<https://app.resultsscorecard.com/Scorecard/Embed/8502>)

- **Legislative Forum:** In December, the CCRPC hosted a Legislative briefing to serve as a forum for municipal representatives and legislators to connect on a few important topics for the upcoming legislative session, including: Act 250 changes, housing, broadband, water quality funding, regional dispatch, energy/climate, cannabis, the economy and workforce, transportation investments, property tax implications of Covid-19 and racial equity (<http://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/commission/policies-positions/>).

## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long-term economic gain.

- **Lake Champlain Byway:** Chittenden County includes eight of the Byway's 22 communities: Milton, Colchester, Winooski, Essex Junction, Burlington, South Burlington, Shelburne, and Charlotte. CCRPC staff maintained the Byway website (<https://lakechamplainbyway.com/>) including a helpful Interactive Map (<http://map.ccrpcvt.org/lcbyway/> which was updated to fix broken hyperlinks and updated images).
- Continued our strong partnership with GBIC/LCRCC working together to advance plans, policies, and projects that improve our economy such as the Brownfields program below.
- **Community Development:** CCRPC continued assisting with grant administration on behalf of the Town of Bolton on the CDBG grant for hotel and water/wastewater improvements at Bolton Valley. CCRPC began assisting Westford with program management for a community wastewater system in the Village. This includes application and administration of a VCDP planning grant. Under an MPG grant, CCRPC is working as program manager for community wastewater in Huntington including working on a RFQ for engineering, grant writing assistance and developing a workplan for bringing this project to fruition. Assisted Hinesburg in evaluating an EDA grant application to upgrade the Town's wastewater facility.
- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy:** With federal funding from the US Economic Development Administration, CCRPC began work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for our region and the Addison, Rutland and Central VT regions -- collectively called the [West Central Vermont CEDS](#). Ultimately this document will help identify priority economic development strategies and projects and will be used by a variety of federal and state funding programs when making grant decisions.

## BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

- CCRPC obtained a \$400,000 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant in FY16; and a \$300,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant in FY18. Since the fall of 2016, using these two grants the

program has provided \$586,488 to assess perceived or real contamination issues in various municipalities.

- Bolton: 4302 Bolton Valley Access Road (Bolton Valley Resort)
- Burlington: 316 Flynn Avenue (Redstone Apartments); 400 Pine Street/20 Howard Street (Unsworth Properties); 339 Pine Street (Railyard Enterprise Project); 56 and 58 North Avenue (Sarah Holbrook Center); Lake Street (Waterfront Park); 314 North Winooski (Champlain Transmission); 75 Briggs Street (Petra Cliffs); 207 Flynn Avenue (City Market); 453 Pine Street (near Barge Canal); 405 Pine Street (Burlington City Arts); 44 Lakeside Avenue (Blodgett Ovens / HULA); 241 N. Winooski Avenue (McClure Center); 676 Riverside Avenue / 56 Bright Street (Burlington Housing Authority); 157 South Champlain Street (former Autoclean car detail).
- Colchester: 2031 Roosevelt Highway (Champlain Chiropractic); 110 Heineberg Road (New York Cleaners).
- Essex Junction: 3 Maple Street (Chittenden Crossing) and 1 Main Street (Road Res-Q).
- Milton: 7 River Street (Milton Grange) and 204-210 & 214-218 U.S. Route 7 (Town-VAOT “Hourglass” Road reconfiguration project).
- Shelburne: 5531 Spear Street (Kwiniaska/Fairway at Spear).
- South Burlington: 600 Spear Street (south of UVM Farm Barn)
- Westford: 1705 VT Route 128 (parcel adjacent to Town Office)
- Williston at the Jacob parcel (Stirrup Circle) and the Catamount Outdoor Family Center.
- Winooski: 4 & 12 Winooski Falls Way (south of traffic circle); City Lot 7D on Winooski Falls Way (behind CCV); 42 Pine Street (Myers Pool); City Lot 8 on Winooski Falls Way (in front of Waterworks Restaurant), and 355 Main Street (Andy’s Used Cars)
- Outside of County: Barre – 16 Prospect Street (Bonacorsi); Montpelier - 65 Granite Shed Lane (Granite Works); Swanton – 1, 3 & 5 Canada Street (near Ace Hardware)

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through contracts with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public and municipal involvement in planning for improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the region’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

The CCRPC serves as the only metropolitan planning organization (MPO) operating within Vermont. MPOs are federally mandated and funded transportation planning organizations governed by representatives from local municipalities and state transportation agencies /departments. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs is channeled through this planning process. Congress created MPOs in order to ensure that transportation projects and programs in urbanized areas (population greater than 50,000) are based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (“3-C”) planning process that serve the needs of the municipalities in the area.

### **Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

**TAC Activity:** The TAC met 10 times in FY21. Seventeen member municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning and TAC attendance varied from 10 to 21 members, from 32% to 68% of total membership. Twelve (12) non-municipal TAC members were actively engaged in transportation planning in the county.

**TAC Outcomes:** The TAC approved, discussed, received presentations on and/or made recommendations on the following projects/tasks:

- Statewide Rail and Freight Plans
- CCRPC Public Participation Plan and Title VI
- Jericho MRGP Plan
- Transportation Resilience Planning Tool
- Williston Form-based Code Project
- FTA Title VI Program
- Burlington Winooski Avenue Corridor Study
- Vermont Data: COVID-19's Impacts on Commuting
- Transportation Equity Coalition
- TAC Roundtable: COVID-19 Impacts on This Construction Season
- Functional Classification Changes
- Racial Equity Consultant Selection
- Federal Aid Funding and Highway Legislation
- VTrans Proposed Congestion Policy Update
- I-89 2050 Study Update
- Asset Management Roundtable Discussion
- Various TIP Amendments
- Shelburne Street Roundabout
- FY22 UPWP Work Plan and Budget
- Traffic Impact Studies 101
- CCRPC Planning, Engineering, and Environmental Services RFQ
- Updates to Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment Procedures
- Draft FY2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- 2023 Transportation Project Prioritization using VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization System (VPSP2) and Pilot Transportation Equity Screen
- VPSP2 Updates

***Transportation Coordination Activities with Municipalities and VTrans Provided by CCRPC:***

- Partnering with VTrans, municipalities and other stakeholders on the ongoing Chittenden County I-89 2050 Study.
- Collaborated with VTrans, provided funding, and promoted participation in the 2020/2021 Way to Go! School Challenge; and conducted TDM outreach to municipalities, businesses, and partners countywide through CATMA.
- VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization Methodology (VPSP2) effort: participated in the VPSP2 Core Group and TPI presentations and discussions.
- Continue to monitor the real time travel data from Bluetooth sensors in five major corridors in the county; investigating ways to integrate the data into the State's Tristate ATMS.

- Coordinated with VTrans and NRPC to further evaluate a possible Park & Ride site at Exit 17 and reached out to the municipality (Colchester) to receive input on this facility.
- Participated in discussions with VTrans and Richmond on the US2 paving/slab removal project. Coordinated with Richmond to complete VTrans' New Project Summary.
- Coordinate with VTrans and Charlotte on a Road Safety Audit for Ferry Road.
- Ongoing assistance to municipalities on VTrans' Bridge Scoping questionnaires.
- Ongoing coordination with VTrans, FHWA and FTA on highway and transit performance measures and targets.
- Bike & Ped Program – worked with the Cities of Burlington, South Burlington and Winooski as well as UVM, Champlain College and CATMA to complete Greenride Bikeshare fleet expansion and conversion to E-Bikes; assisted with and supported municipal applications to state bike/ped grant programs; assisted with South Burlington's RAISE grant application for a bike/ped bridge near I-89 Exit 14; coordinated with VTrans and Local Motion to relocate electronic bike lockers from Winooski to Exit 11 Park and Ride; promoted TDM strategies to municipalities and businesses; compiled Complete Streets data for Chittenden County municipalities; and, conducted bike/ped counts on paths, bike lanes and roadways.
- Assisted municipalities with Municipal Road General Permit (MRGP) tasks and submitted Road Erosion Inventory (REI) data for all municipalities in the county to the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).
- Provided Annual Traffic Alert communications outreach program.

## **Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

**Regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):** The 2018 MTP was adopted by the CCRPC Board June of 2018 (<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/ecos-metropolitan-transportation-plan/>).

**Municipal Transportation Plans:** 18 municipalities have current municipal plans that include an updated transportation component. In FY21, the CCRPC assisted two (2) municipalities with the transportation element of their municipal plan.

**Act-250 and Section 248 Reviews:** CCRPC staff reviewed all applications in Chittenden County but participated only in major applications and a small number of minor ones with potentially significant impacts. In FY21, the CCRPC provided transportation related comments for three (3) Act-250 applications and two (2) Section 248 applications.

**Coordination with Public Transit Providers:** Staff participated in regional public transit planning activities including:

- The Elderly & People with Disabilities program advisory committee
- GMT's ADA Advisory Committee
- United Way's Neighbor Rides (volunteer driver program) Advisory Committee
- Tri-Town Transportation Study
- Future of Rural Transit Study
- Tilley Drive Transit

**RPC participation in VTrans committees:** A list of committees that the CCRPC staff participated in is provided below:

- Public Transit Advisory Council
- Rail Advisory Council
- VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization (VPSP2) Core Group

- State Rail Plan
- State Freight Plan Advisory Committee
- Vermont Highway Safety Alliance
- Way to Go! Challenge
- Transportation Resilience Planning Tool (TRPT) working group

**Project Prioritization:** The CCRPC prioritizes Capital Projects on the state's Transportation Program once a year. In addition, the CCRPC has a representative on the Core Team for the VPSP2 prioritization effort.

### **Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

During FY21, the CCRPC hosted regional transportation meetings; initiated, managed, and was involved in major regional and local transportation plans, studies, and initiatives; provided technical assistance and support to municipalities and partners on transportation issues. Please see below for more information on these activities.

**Road Foreman Meetings:** Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the CCRPC did not host their usual Spring Road Foreman Meeting. CCRPC staff shared events and funding opportunities throughout the year as appropriate.

**Assistance with Transportation Grants:** Staff assisted municipalities and provided letters of support for 14 grant applications including Better Roads, VTrans Transportation Alternatives, and VTrans Bike/Ped grants.

**Budget Spent on Municipal Assistance:** The CCRPC invests approximately 70% of MPO funding for municipal assistance.

#### **CCRPC Data Collection in FY21:**

- Two (2) Pavement Inventories, one (1) Stop/Speed Limit Sign Inventory, and eight (8) updates to Culvert Inventories.
- Complete Streets Inventory.
- While the CCRPC's transportation count program was limited in FY21 due to Covid-19, 4 ATR counts and 17 Bike/Ped were collected.

**Participation in Transportation Planning and Project Development Activities:** Below is the list of Planning Assistance, Project Definition (Scoping), water quality/transportation planning and Municipal Construction Projects (Local Project Management: LPM) that the CCRPC managed in FY21:

- Railyard Enterprise Supplemental Scoping Project (Burlington)
- Burlington Property Transportation Plan
- City Center Parking & Movement Plan (So. Burlington)
- Intermodal Facilities and Official Map (Williston)
- Winooski Parking Inventory, Analysis, and Management Plan
- Update to So. Burlington Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance
- Transportation Impact Fee Study (Winooski)
- North Williston Road Traffic Calming Evaluation (Williston)
- City of Burlington School District School Travel Plans and Traffic Control Plans
- Huntington Bridge Improvement & Maintenance Plan
- CCRPC Bicycle Count Program Evaluation and Data Analysis

- Lake Street Stormwater and Sidewalk Feasibility Study (Burlington)
- Bikeway Connectivity, Pedestrian Safety, and Stormwater Management in the Old North End (Burlington)
- River Road/Pleasant Valley Road Bicyclist Accommodation and Pavement Analysis (Underhill)
- Exit 17 Park & Ride Supplemental Evaluation (Colchester)
- Burlington Winooski Avenue Corridor Study - Phase 3
- Chittenden County I-89 2050 Study
- Bridge Street Complete Streets Corridor Study (Richmond)
- Lower Village Supplemental Scoping (Huntington)
- Multiuse Path Connecting Williston to South Burlington - Supplemental Scoping
- Queen City Park Road/Austin Drive Bike and Pedestrian Connections Scoping
- Colchester Avenue Protected Bike Lanes and East Avenue Intersection Safety Improvements (Burlington)
- Tanglewood Drive Shared-Use Path and Stormwater Scoping Project (Essex)
- Richmond Road Intersection Scoping (Hinesburg)
- Jericho Riverside Village Sidewalk Scoping Study
- Jericho Bolger Hill Road Supplemental Scoping
- So. Burlington Swift St/Spear St Intersection Feasibility Study
- Williston VT2A Connector Path Scoping Study
- Right-of-Way Condition Inventory for Stormwater Retrofit Feasibility – Phase 1 (Burlington)
- Essex Town and Essex junction Stormwater CCTV Inspection
- Town of Williston Phosphorus Control Plan
- City of Winooski Phosphorus Control Plan (Phase 2)
- Inspection and Inventory of Existing Stormwater System (Winooski)
- Colchester Stormwater Condition Assessment (Phase 2)
- Huntington MRGP Implementation Plan
- Milton Phosphorus Control Plan
- Shelburne Phosphorus Control Plan
- LPM services for Underhill sidewalk construction on VT 15
- LPM services for Hinesburg Village South VT 116 sidewalk design and construction
- LPM services for Shelburne for the Irish Hill Road sidewalk and pedestrian bridge project

The CCRPC managed the following multimodal Corridor and Area-wide Studies:

- Chittenden County I-89 2050 Study
- Kimball Ave/Kennedy Dr/Old Farm Rd/Tilley Drive/VT 116 Transportation Needs Analysis (South Burlington)
- Winooski Avenue Corridor Study (Burlington)
- Richmond Bike/Ped/Trails Master Plan – Phase 1
- Close the Gaps in Regional Bike Facilities

The CCRPC was also involved in the following Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives and studies:

- Annual Way to Go! School Challenge to encourage non-single occupant vehicle travel and demonstrate the environmental and financial benefits, with a focus on schools but program

updates and a spring event open to all Vermonters in response to COVID-19 impacts ([www.WayToGoVT.org](http://www.WayToGoVT.org)).

- Provided funding to CATMA, CarShare Vermont, Local Motion, UVM TRC, and Old Spokes Home for TDM projects and technical assistance.
- Since 2013, the CCRPC has been investing in United Way's Neighbor Rides program to integrate volunteer drivers into human services transportation in order to increase access to transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities by offering a lower-cost option. In FY21, this program shifted its focus to work with community partners on a more collaborative volunteer driver strategy. However, as the Covid-19 pandemic evolved, this goal was revised to focus on integrating health and safety strategies within the program.

**Road Erosion Inventories in Support of Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP):** Completed road erosion inventories (REI) for all 19 municipalities in Chittenden County. Staff updated REI data for 17 municipalities based on information from municipalities and site visits.

#### **Objective #4: Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans**

**CCRPC Data Collection Activities Conducted Specifically for VTrans:** CCRPC staff conducted the following activities in support of VTrans' Plans:

- 17 bike/ped specific counts
- 4 ATRs
- 19 Park & Ride counts (9 State & 10 Municipal)
- Reviewed and updated MIRE data in 18 municipalities (excluding Buel's Gore)
- Staff collected information from each municipality on new bicycle and sidewalk facilities and added them to the regional map. CCRPC updates its regional bike/ped database annually and has recently migrated the database schema to be consistent with VTrans' standards.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center when needed, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency operations plans and assisted as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other disasters.

- **COVID:** During the unprecedented time of global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CCRPC staff worked extensively with municipalities, state health officials, and the public to relay important updates, resources, and general information about the pandemic. A COVID-19 Municipal Response webpage was developed and maintained (<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/covid-19/>). CCRPC staff assisted Chittenden County municipalities with applications for the Local Government Expense Reimbursement (LGER) grant program to help cover the cost of eligible COVID-19 expenses such as supplies, facility alterations and overtime compensation.
- **FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation:** CCRPC collected information from each municipality on annual implementation of hazard mitigation activities recommended in the County and Municipal All-Hazard Mitigation Plans.

- **Local Emergency Management Plans:** 19 out of 19 (100%) municipalities in the CCRPC region currently have completed their updated local emergency management plan. CCRPC is working with Buel's Gore to complete the LEMP signature page. Once that is submitted to VEM all Chittenden County municipalities will have adopted LEMPS.
- **Local Emergency Planning Committee:** CCRPC hosted the final meetings of Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC 1, <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/committees/local-emergency-planning-committee/>) and worked with the state on the transition to a statewide LEPC starting in July 2021.
- **Local Liaison:** CCRPC served as a key coordinator between municipalities and the state to collect damage assessment information after significant storm events.
- **Hazardous Materials:** Helped with emergency preparedness for hazardous materials incidents by exported the Tier data for Chittenden County from Tier II Submit to a table format and provided a list of facilities and chemicals to each EMD in the county.

## GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- **Town-Specific Web Maps:** Updated/created interactive town-specific web maps, story maps, and dashboards for Bolton, Buel's Gore, Charlotte, Essex Junction, Hinesburg, Huntington, Jericho, Milton, Richmond, Shelburne, South Burlington, Underhill, Westford, and Winooski. Developed a map-based survey tool for the Burlington School District's Travel Plan to collect information on travel concerns for the district's 9 school campuses.
- **Regional Web Maps:** Created an interactive map of regional bike facilities. Created a story map, web map and dashboard for the Lewis Creek Association's South Chittenden River Watch. Created a regional map depicting broadband status in the region. Updated the ECOS Map Viewer, River Corridor Planning map viewer, and Permit Review map viewer with more current data.
- **Town Plan Maps:** Created wall-size maps for Westford.
- **GIS Data:** Developed or updated numerous GIS datasets (ash tree inventories, zoning, , culverts, housing points, , scenic resources, state designations, , trails, conserved land, utilities, etc.) for Bolton, Burlington, Charlotte, Colchester, , Hinesburg, Jericho, Milton, Shelburne, South Burlington, Underhill, Westford, Williston and Winooski. Utilized ESRI's Business Analyst tool to provide Williston, Essex, and Milton with demographic and employment information.
- **Colchester Map Service:** Continued to provide updates to their map service which links to the Town's VueWorks Asset Management system.
- **Winooski Map Service:** Continued to provide updates to the map service which links to Winooski's NexGen Asset Management system.
- **Regional Conservation Area Project:** Continued to participate in the Champlain Valley Partnership and provide mapping support. The CVP partnership continues to work on inventorying and mapping conserved areas using the Vermont Center for Geographic Information's Protected Land data standard.
- **Data available via Vermont Open Data Portal:** Uploaded housing points, regional future land use, municipal zoning and overlay data to the portal to allow public access to the GIS data.

- **VOBCIT:** CCRPC continues to work with partners to improve, enhance and support the VOBCIT website (<https://vtculverts.org>).

## ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- **Regional Energy Plan:** The *2018 Chittenden County ECOS Plan* was granted an Affirmative Determination of Energy Compliance by the Department of Public Service on August 9, 2018. CCRPC has increased participation in PUC proceedings (applications for Certificates of Public Good and various investigations) to ensure that local and regional policies are recognized. CCRPC participated in 3 PUC proceedings in FY21.
- **Municipal Energy Plans:** The CCRPC board granted affirmative determinations of energy compliance to enhanced energy plans in Westford and Williston. Eleven municipalities have adopted enhanced energy plans and three municipalities have plans in development (Hinesburg, Underhill and South Burlington).
- **Energy Planning Implementation:** The CCRPC participated in implementation activities funded by Efficiency Vermont which include Weatherization Wednesdays, a Button-Up Vermont event, statewide RPC roundtables, energy data reporting and training, energy committee technical assistance, and electric vehicle education webinars. Assisted the Charlotte energy committee members and town staff regarding the process for supporting net-metered preferred sites.
- **State Energy Planning:** CCRPC participated in conversations to assist the Vermont Climate Council committees in their work. CCRPC has provided input into the state Comprehensive Energy Plan update; and assisted in hosting a local input meeting. CCRPC commented on VELCO's draft Long Range Transportation Plan. CCRPC has also participated in a working group to update Act 174 standards for regional and municipal energy plans.

## WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA-required watershed tactical basin plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations for better and safer growth management decisions.

- **Clean Water:** The CCRPC's water quality initiatives help to safeguard our clean drinking water, support our recreation and tourism industry, and make our municipalities more resilient to flood events. The CCRPC continues to host the Clean Water Advisory Committee and the MS-4 Sub-Committee (<https://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/committees/clean-water-advisory-committee/>) and provide guidance for the Vermont Clean Water Fund. CCRPC staff also joined the Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program Advisory Committee, participated in Vermont Clean Water Network meetings, assisted municipalities with developing stormwater master plans and implementing Clean Water Block Grant projects, supported education programs such as the Rethink Runoff (<http://www.rethinkrunoff.org>), assisted with watershed resiliency mapping,

participated in water quality-focused policy discussions, and was appointed by the Vermont DEC to become the Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for the Northern Lake Champlain Direct Drainages, Basin (5). As the Basin 5 CWSP, the CCRPC will oversee the development and implementation of non-regulatory water quality improvement projects that reduce phosphorus loading into these streams and Lake Champlain.

- **Block Grants:** Through funding provided by the DEC and administered by the Mount Ascutney Regional Planning Commission, the CCRPC managed Clean Water Block Grants to implement the following stormwater projects: in Jericho, design of two stormwater infiltration best management practices for Jericho Center; in Winooski, design of an upgrade to an existing outfall experiencing severe erosion on Elm Street. The CCRPC also secured a Design Implementation Block Grant for Shelburne and Milton.
- **Water Quality Outreach:** CCRPC is managing, with all RPCs as sub-grantees, a grant provided from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to conduct a multi-pronged outreach effort focused on improving water quality in compliance with the Vermont Clean Water Act (VCWA). CCRPC continues work with municipal staff and boards to provide information about the requirements for municipalities triggered by the VCWA and also work with them on options such as stronger municipal protections against flood hazards and river corridor erosion, stormwater master planning, and other town plan or zoning changes to improve water quality. CCRPC completed assistance on the final Northern Lake Champlain Direct Drainages Tactical Basin Plan.
- **Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) Compliance and Water Quality Planning Assistance:** CRRPC staff continues to work with all Chittenden County municipalities on meeting their MRGP obligations. This includes evaluating segments through Road Erosion Inventories (REIs), tracking and documenting upgraded segments and outlets, and reporting to DEC. Staff also assists municipalities with the State's Grants in Aid (GIA) program, which allocates money to participating towns for stormwater improvements related to the MRGP. In FY2021, 13 Chittenden County municipalities signed up to participate in the GIA program; an estimated 38 non-compliant segments will be upgraded using the allocated \$253,000. CCRPC staff wrote letters of support and assisted six municipalities (Bolton, Essex Junction, Hinesburg, Milton, Richmond, Williston) with FY21 **Better Roads** grants to secure funding for erosion control and maintenance activities that protect and enhance water quality around our region. The CCRPC also provided funding to municipalities through the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for inspection and inventory of their stormwater system, development of Phosphorus Control Plans (PCPs) for MS4 communities and conceptual plans for transportation-related water quality projects on local roads.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

- **Racial Equity & Public Engagement:** Achieving a healthy, inclusive, and prosperous future for Chittenden County is the vision of our Regional ECOS Plan. However, the ECOS partners know we cannot achieve that future without addressing the systemic racism in our community. While addressing inequity has been one of the eight key strategies in the ECOS Plan since 2013, there is much work to be done. Throughout the past fiscal year, CCRPC staff have started to plan for the update of the **2014 Public Participation Plan (PPP)**: <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/our-work/our-plans/public-participation-plan/> with a renewed focus on analyzing inequities in all sectors of our work to ensure that we actively eliminate barriers

and foster an inclusive and meaningful public engagement for all planning and policy work we do – this meaningful engagement is the foundation that leads to actions that meet the needs of our diverse community. In FY20, the CCRPC continued to address issues related to racial and economic disparities through the following actions:

- Hiring a consultant, Creative Discourse, to address racial equity within the organization.
- Established a CCRPC Racial Equity Leadership Team.
- Facilitating, providing, and/or taking advantage of educational opportunities for our staff, municipalities, and other local and regional partners that address inequities and advance anti-racism efforts.
- Strengthening existing relationships and partnerships and forging new ones with Vermont organizations working to advance anti-racism efforts.
- In FY21 we will be holding an Equity Summit and examining our organization's policies, practices, culture, and services through the lens of anti-racism and white privilege to ensure they reflect our commitment to racial justice.
- **Building Homes Together:** The Building Homes Together campaign was initiated by the CCRPC, Champlain Housing Trust, and Housing Vermont (now Evernorth) in 2016. The campaign, supported by over a hundred local and state officials, nonprofits, businesses, and individuals, set a five-year goal of 3,500 new homes in Chittenden County with 20% of them permanently affordable. This amounts to an annual target of 700 overall homes with 140 affordable; the average over the first four years is 787 homes, and only 112 of them affordable. While the 2020 annual progress report showed continued overall success in new housing being created, there is still a persistent lack of affordable homes in our region. More information can be found at <http://www.ecosproject.com/building-homes-together/>.
- **Public Health:** CCRPC staff continues to be engaged with substance use prevention by participating in the Vermont Department of Health's Regional Prevention Partnership (RPP) grant. The RPP activities are led by the United Way of Northwest Vermont and focus on developing a strategic plan that will lay the groundwork for a regional prevention network in Northwest Vermont. In response to remote work, education, health care, and other needs prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency, the CCRPC has been assisting state agencies and municipalities with a number of pandemic-related planning efforts through the following actions:
  - Identification of locations with free public Wi-Fi for access to the internet.
  - Support with COVID-19 information sharing between Vermont Emergency Management, municipalities, and other partners.
  - Participation in the Governor's COVID press conferences and Vermont Emergency Management's municipal official meetings.

## ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

The CCRPC receives most of its funding through performance-based grants and contracts with the state. Town assessments constitute a small but very important percentage of our funding. Individual municipalities also contribute match dollars for some federally funded transportation planning projects within their own borders. For the 2021 fiscal year, the CCRPC's total revenue of over \$4.8 million dollars was derived from about 74% federally funded grants, 14.7% state funding, and 10.6% from

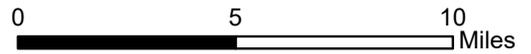
municipalities. Nearly \$2.6 million, over 50% of the total funding, was passed through to consultants or sub-grantees.

All of the CCRPC's revenue sources are tied to federal, state, or municipal agreements with scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures. CCRPC works with our members and VTrans to decide the best way to invest our MPO funding annually in developing our Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Municipal dues, and the funding received through the CCRPC's performance agreement with ACCD, are also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable us to work with our municipalities on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, public health, and natural resources. Revenue from federal and state grantors typically requires non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (transportation planning) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant).

The CCRPC conducts a single audit on an annual basis. The federal single audit field work was conducted in September 2021, with the full report to be completed by November 2021.

### **'AT WORK' MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the CCRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.



**Projects**

- Bridge and Culvert Inventory
- Brownfield
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning
- Grant Writing
- Healthy Communities
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Road Erosion Inventory
- Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

**Designation**

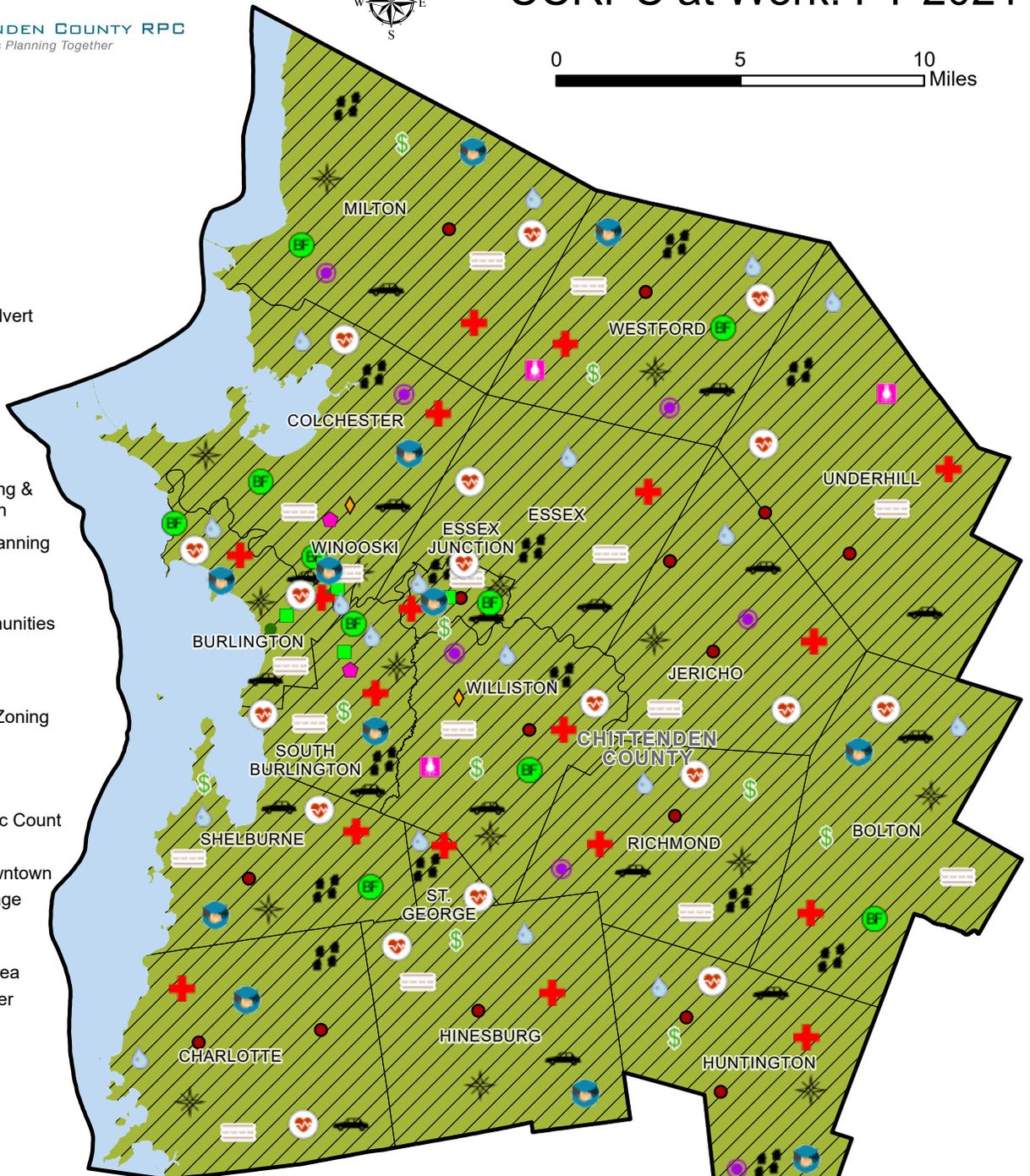
- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Growth Center
- Neighborhood Development Area
- New Town Center

**Town Bylaw Status**

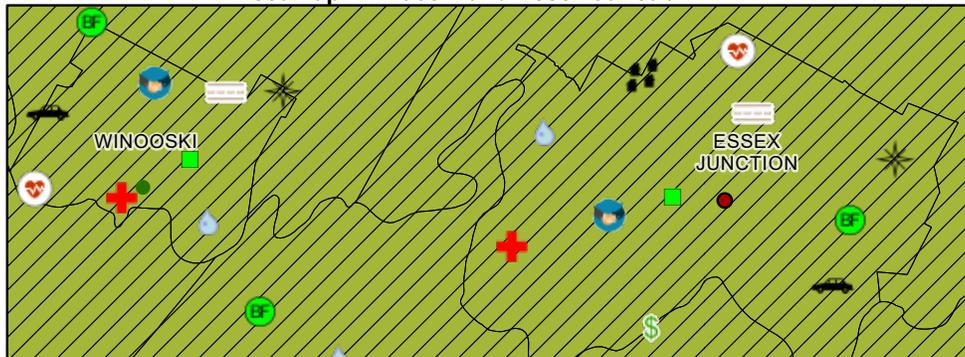
- Adopted

**Town Plan Status**

- Current
- No Town Plan



**Inset Map: Winooski and Essex Junction**



# Lamoille County Planning Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

Founded in 1966 as the Lamoille County Planning and Development Corporation, the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) continues to be an important resource to the 15 municipalities of Lamoille County – ten towns and five incorporated villages. The county’s economy is primarily tourism-based - including two major ski resorts – with a growing number of home-grown, nationally-renowned businesses, such as Concept 2, MSI, and Butternut Mountain Farm. LCPC’s mission is to ensure the protection of the region’s environment and conservation of natural resources, and to facilitate sustainable economic development for the benefit of all residents and visitors through a coordinated and cooperative planning process at the local level.

Each municipality’s legislative body (Selectboard or Trustees) determines who will represent them on the LCPC Board of Directors. Member municipalities of 2,500 residents or greater appoint two directors and municipalities under 2,500 appoint one director to represent that municipality’s interest in regional affairs. Additionally, the LCPC has five at-large, elected directors to represent regional interests. Directors serve on committees that make recommendations to the full 23-member Board of Directors. The LCPC has eight highly qualified full-time and part-time staff providing support to the Board and its committees and executing the Commission’s multifaceted work program.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont’s municipalities. Work in recent years has focused on improving municipal plans and local permitting through education and consultations, bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards, and implementing statutory requirements for flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential for smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map on the final page of the report. Highlights include:

- Over the last six years, LCPC has assisted Cambridge in implementing major aspects of the “Jeffersonville Flood Mitigation Master Plan” developed with support from State and Federal grants. The mitigation measures are funded through a mix of Federal (HMGP, CDBG) and State (ERP) funds. Hydraulic modeling completed as part of the Town’s and Village’s flood mitigation planning effort predicted that the measures would reduce flood levels in the Village core by up to 1.5 feet. The flood mitigation projects experienced their first major test during the November 1, 2019 floods. Despite record flood levels in the Lamoille River, the measures preformed as modeled, preventing evacuation of the Village’s senior housing and other areas of the Village. The LCPC continues to explore other flood mitigation options with communities and partners along the Lamoille River including floodplain restoration near the VT Fish and Wildlife Access off Route 108, and streambank restoration near the confluence of the Lamoille and Brewster Rivers.
- The LCPC completed the long-term Management Plan for the former Bell Gates Lumber Mill, which was purchased as part of the Village of Jeffersonville’s flood mitigation efforts. The Management Plan envisions the space as a vibrant, multipurpose gateway park for the Village

that also provides floodwater storage and stormwater management. Components of the Long-Term-Management Plan were incorporated into design planning efforts for the Jeffersonville Stormwater Master Plan.

- In response to concerns raised for the past few years at Waterville’s Town Meeting, the LCPC worked with the Town of Waterville to secure an FY20 Municipal Planning Grant to explore further options for pedestrian safety in the Village Center near the Town Hall. The LCPC worked with the Town of Waterville to develop conceptual plans for improving pedestrian safety in the Village Center and near the Waterville Elementary School. The LCPC is working with the Town to submit priority safety requests to VTrans, including a “signed pedestrian zone” in the Village Center and improving signage near the Waterville Elementary School. Similar pedestrian safety planning efforts are taking place in North Hyde Park under the MPG FY20 Consortia Grant. The LCPC, with input from the Town and it’s dedicated Gihon Valley Hall Committee, developed conceptual plans to improve safety for pedestrians and connectivity in North Hyde Park Village. LCPC staff are assisting the Town in refining an application to participate in the new VTrans Demonstration Project Program. The proposed demonstration would allow the community to test safety improvements such as proposed crosswalks, sidewalks, walking paths, or improved signage.
- The LCPC provides ongoing assistance to Belvidere for transportation project planning and management including project management services for replacement of the culvert on Bog Road, as well as project management services for Better Roads and Grant in Aid projects.
- The Commission was active in water quality issues including implementing water quality projects and programs to protect water resources, ensuring safe water supplies, enhancing recreational opportunities, and addressing known sources of pollution. For example, the LCPC assisted the Town of Cambridge in hiring a consultant to develop a Stormwater Master Plan for Cambridge Village and Jeffersonville Village. The LCPC assisted in securing Clean Water Block Grants to further explore floodplain restoration/flood mitigation alternatives to alleviate flooding in Jeffersonville and the Town of Wolcott along the Wild Branch and Lamoille River.
- The LCPC provided help identifying appropriate funding sources, defining project scope, and writing applications for numerous municipalities which, among other grants, resulted in municipal planning grants for a consortium of Cambridge and Hyde Park.
- The LCPC assisted the Village of Jeffersonville in securing a \$250,000 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission. The grant will fund critically needed upgrades to the Village Water system that will enable economic development and workforce housing in the Village core.
- The LCPC is assisting the Town of Elmore with identifying possible locations to relocate their Town Highway Garage, which has reached the end of its useful life.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING**

Regional Planning Commissions coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors. The Lamoille County Regional Plan was adopted in 2015. The LCPC has updated their Act 250 review process, making the process more transparent, understandable, and accessible to both developers and municipalities. The Commission has engaged in extensive outreach to increase regional understanding of the Commission’s role in the Act 250 process. In FY 21, The LCPC reviewed two major Act 250 applications and five Section 248 applications.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic growth. This year the LCPC worked with partners from the Northeast Kingdom and Franklin County through the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) to develop an Economic Recovery Plan to guide COVID 19 recovery efforts and future economic growth for the region. The 12 priority areas targeted by the NVEDD are:

1. Broadband
2. Housing
3. Diversity and Equity
4. Water and Sewer
5. Childcare
6. Business Support
7. Transportation
8. Civic and Cultural infrastructure
9. Outdoor Economy and Recreation
10. Agriculture, Working Lands, and Food Systems
11. Education and Workforce Development
12. Climate Change and Resiliency

In 2021, the Executive Director of the LCPC, Tasha Wallis, served as Co-Chair of the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD). The NVEDD completed work on a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDSS) and is poised to further contribute to economic development throughout the Lamoille County region.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission worked with a broad range of partners to secure a \$300,000 Working Communities Challenge (WCC) grant through the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston in order to improve employment outcomes for a broad range of job seekers. Staff continue to work actively with multiple partners in these effort with a particular focus on broadband expansion and transportation opportunities to assist individuals seeking employment.

The LCPC has also been honored to support the efforts of Jenna’s Promise – a local non-profit working to develop full spectrum recovery programs for people in recovery from opioid abuse. In the upcoming fiscal year, the LCPC will provide grant and financial management services for a Community Development Block Grant awarded to Jenna’s Promise. The CDBG will be used to restore a building in the Johnson Village Center to include supportive housing and a coffee shop that will provide job training for people in the recovery program.

### **Infrastructure Planning (Broadband and Water/Wastewater Systems)**

In FY21, the LCPC provided broadband planning assistance to the newly formed Lamoille FiberNet Communications Union District (LFCUD). The district now represents nine towns in Lamoille County. A

Communication Union District (CUD) is a unique kind of Vermont municipality comprised of two or more towns and established for the purpose of building communication infrastructure together.

Prior to forming the CUD, with the LCPC's guidance, town broadband committees and interested residents worked together for over six months to study options for high-speed internet deployment in Lamoille County. Following this learning period, the group recommended to town Selectboards a CUD, as the most fitting governing structure to pursue the goal of providing universal access to high speed, reliable, and affordable internet service to all residents and businesses.

This year the LCPC assisted the Lamoille Fibernet Communications Union District (LFCUD) in preparing a USDA Broadband application to fund FY22 broadband planning efforts lead by the Lamoille CUD. In July of 2021, the LCPC was notified of the Grant Award. The LCPC will serve as the grant manager and provide mapping services for broadband planning efforts. The LFCUD is in the process of hiring an Executive Director to assist in providing broadband planning services. The LCPC and Lamoille CUD would like to thank Christine Hallquist for providing broadband planning consulting services these past few months.

Lack of critical infrastructure such as water, wastewater, and broadband, impedes economic development in much of rural Vermont. The LCPC continues to work with municipalities to identify new funding sources for this infrastructure, and to seek creative means to maximize use of existing, but limited, capacity such as encouraging mixed use development, relaxed setbacks, and frontage standards so that more users can be accommodated within existing service areas, and flexible parking standards. In early 2019, the LCPC began assisting Wolcott in a DEC sponsored program funded by the Northern Borders Regional Commission to explore and evaluate small scale wastewater solutions for Wolcott Village. The LCPC is also providing planning and grant writing assistance to the Village of Jeffersonville in its efforts to secure an additional water source for the Village Water System. The LCPC also worked with Vermont DEC to improve coordination of wastewater planning in unsewered, rural Villages.

The LCPC continues to work closely with the Lamoille Economic Development Corporation in order to foster development in the region. The Executive Director of each organization serves *ex officio* on the other's board. This level of coordination allows for improved communication, development, and community outreach.

The Commission, along with members of the Smugglers' Notch Partnership, completed another successful summer of operations at the Barnes Camp Visitors' Center. The LCPC worked with the Green Mountain Club and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation to continue outdoor volunteer operations at the Barnes Camp Visitors' Center consistent with COVID 19 safety protocols. Despite a challenging season, Barnes Camp remained a popular spot for tourists exploring the area and helped the region weather the severe impacts to the tourism economy in 2020.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through a contract with the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), each RPC coordinates the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). The TAC

includes representatives from local communities and transportation stakeholders also have the opportunity to provide input.

Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

In this reporting period, the Lamoille County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met eight times, with an average member participation rate of 26.6%. Some outcomes of this year's TAC activities include:

1. Presentation by Vermont Emergency Management on the State Emergency Operations Center;
2. Discussion of the 3-acre Rule's regulatory impact;
3. Overview and trial run of new Annual Prioritization Process for transportation projects;
4. Provided VTrans input in accordance with the new annual State Project Prioritization Process.

The Lamoille County Road Foremen Network was unable to meet during the year due to COVID restrictions. Meetings will be planned for the upcoming year as restrictions ease. In lieu of the meetings, at irregular intervals the LCPC staff met with road foremen, superintendents, and commissioners individually (outside and following department of health safety guidance) to offer technical assistance, discuss municipal issues of concern, and act as liaison to VTrans and other state agencies' staff as needed and upon request for specific topics.

Other Outreach and Municipal assistance were fewer than in previous years due to the constraints imposed by COVID. However, the LCPC served on several committees including the Regional E&D committee, Rural Community Transportation's Personnel committee, and the Green Mountain Transit Diversity committee. COVID dominated all municipal assistance and public outreach this year. Municipalities had seemingly endless "what if" questions regarding continuity of operations related to road maintenance. Those questions, and confusion from municipalities, have evolved to provide clarification on ARPA funds for highway and stormwater projects. Additionally, during the early months of COVID, the LCPC partnered with our regional human services partners to provide free masks and gloves for highway department staff; outreach was conducted, requests were compiled, and the LCPC staff delivered masks and gloves to towns on several occasions. Accelerated Bridge Program staff had a particularly difficult time making contact with one of our towns to hold a public information meeting. The LCPC staff facilitated and ensured that contact occurred above and beyond what is typically needed, and ultimately participated in the public meeting as usual. Other Outreach and Municipal Assistance provided by the LCPC staff include but is not limited to: one local concerns questionnaire, one formal and one informal road safety audit, one accelerated bridge project meeting, quarterly E&D meetings, human services transportation partners regular meetings, quarterly water quality and fish habitat partners meetings and seasonal site visits with towns, multiple meetings with three towns concerning FEMA disaster transportation projects, multiple meetings with four towns about bike/ped demonstration projects, quarterly meetings with VTrans-UVM road erosion research, TAC meetings, and discussions with seven towns regarding class 4 roads and the reclassification process, regularly recurring Smugglers' Notch & Barnes Camp meetings, and Green Mountain Byway Committee meetings.

Data collection activities by the LCPC for Vermont Agency of Transportation included 36 tube traffic counts, 3 turning movement counts, 3 manual and 4 automatic bike/ped counts, 5 park and ride counts, 2 TRPT watersheds, and 2 town complete street counts

The LCPC continued to participate in the Vermont Better Roads Program, which works to promote use of Best Management Practices for erosion control and maintenance techniques along municipal roads that save money while protecting and enhancing Vermont's lakes and streams. This fiscal year the towns of Johnson, Cambridge, and Wolcott received road erosion inventories funded by this program. All 10 towns are participating in Grant in Aid this year and multiple towns request aid annually on transportation related grants.

We continued to assist towns in recovering from the Halloween Storm of 2019.

The LCPC Transportation Planner facilitated the Green Mountain Byway Committee in partnership with Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC). This grassroots committee recently completed an update to the current Byway Plan and added seven new municipalities (three towns with four villages) to the Byway; the expanded Byway is now a 71-mile loop from Waterbury to Stowe, Morristown, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Cambridge, including the Smugglers' Notch Scenic Highway which takes you back to Stowe.

The LCPC's Transportation Planner facilitated three elderly & disabled public transit meetings in partnership with Northeast Vermont Development Association, and regularly participates as a voting member to Rural Community Transportation and Green Mountain Transit Boards and sub-committees.

The TPI workplan provides several task categories which support municipal planning and technical assistance, and over 50% of the LCPC's total TPI budget supports municipal technical assistance. Example projects that fall under municipal technical assistance are:

- Water Quality: provided coordination with ANR and facilitated group and individual discussions with municipal staff, boards, and other partners in all 10 towns.
- Road Erosion Inventories (REI): continued providing this service for towns to comply with the Municipal Roads General Permit; continued coordination and software development input with other RPC staff and ANR; combined other funds with TPI budget to optimize resources and outcomes.
- Planning Studies: participated in coordination and planning between the Town of Eden, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and VT Agency of Natural Resources regarding the use of court settlement funds from the local asbestos mine for projects with both transportation infrastructure and environmental benefits; prepared for implementation of parking and stormwater improvements for the Smugglers' Notch State Park area in partnership with Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, and Vermont Agency of Transportation; participated in two Technical Advisory Committees with Vermont Agency of Transportation, University of Vermont, and Vermont Agency of Natural Resources - one about the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail Floodplain Access and the other about the cost efficacy of BMPs related to the Municipal Road General Permit in achieving TMDL milestones. The LCPC staff also served on the VTrans Transportation Alternatives grant selection committee.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY

Regional Planning Commissions play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees, and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and assist as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- Staff worked with Stowe to review and update flood hazard bylaws.
- Secured a DEC Block Grant for preliminary design for floodplain/wetland restoration projects in Wolcott to alleviate flood and ice jam damage, while enhancing the community's natural/scenic resources.
- Secured a DEC Block Grant application for exploring streambank/floodplain restoration in Jeffersonville at the VT Fish and Wildlife Access Area and near the Tatro Construction property along the Lamoille River.
- Assisted Cambridge Village and Jeffersonville in exploring flood mitigation/streambank restoration opportunities in the Stormwater Master Plan.
- Staff worked with Waterville, Stowe, Elmore, Johnson, and Belvidere to update their Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- Nine of ten (90%) of municipalities in the region currently have an updated local emergency management plan (LEMP).
- The LCPC continued to provide administrative and technical assistance to LEPC #11 (Local Emergency Planning Committee) to host trainings and emergency preparedness discussions. In FY21, LEPC #11 discussed the transition to a statewide LEPC and the formation of the Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC). The LCPC will continue to work with the new REMC to plan and host trainings for the region.
- Provided ongoing administrative and project management for the 2019 Halloween Storm recovery and mitigation work.
- Staff coordinated with Vermont Forest and Parks and FEMA to implement the plan derived from the Smugglers' Notch Drainage Study to identify alternatives to mitigate flood and erosion damage to Route 108.
- Staff participated in state-wide COVID19 update calls hosted by VEM.
- Staff distributed resource information and COVID19 funding sources to municipalities.
- The LCPC assisted with a home buyout in Cambridge Village and a home elevation in Jeffersonville.
- The LCPC was awarded \$94,277 in Disaster Recovery Technical Assistance funds from USDA Rural Development to provide direct technical assistance to further develop projects that show high potential to protect important community facilities in Lamoille County that are vulnerable to flooding. As of July 1, 2021, the technical assistance program has been used to evaluate options to address flooding and erosion on North Wolcott Road in Wolcott, and at the intersection of Route 109 and Back Road in Belvidere.
- Submitted two BRIC applications to scope improvements to two flood bridges in the Town of Hyde Park.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

In addition to enhancing The LCPC's work, our GIS specialists provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

This year the LCPC:

- Continued a culvert inventory for the Town of Cambridge;
- Began a bridge inventory for the Town of Hyde Park;
- Began looking into updating Green River Reservoir viewshed maps;
- Developed maps for the following:
  - Local Hazard Mitigation Plan map updates for Waterville
  - REI maps for Johnson
  - North Hyde Park and Waterville VTrans demonstration projects
  - Broadband data collected by Tilson Technology Management
  - LFCUD membership maps
  - Parcel maps for the Elmore Town Garage

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resource planning, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

In FY21, The LCPC completed work under a previously received Energy Implementation Grant from Efficiency Vermont to support energy committees and municipalities in promoting energy efficiency. Under this implementation Grant, the LCPC hosted Button Up Vermont/Weatherization Workshops, trainings on local energy rebates/incentives, and provided updated energy data profiles to Lamoille municipalities. The LCPC is currently working with the Town of Cambridge to develop an Enhanced Energy Plan to assist the community in guiding future renewable energy growth and enhancing the municipalities standing in the Section 248 review process.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

The Lamoille County Planning Commission works with the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) to assist with completion of the EPA required Tactical Basin Plans. The LCPC works closely with ANR and municipalities to assess and implement water quality projects. The LCPC also works with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- As part of the Clean Water Initiative, the LCPC conducted outreach on updates to water quality standards, river corridor planning, storm water management, and flood resiliency. The LCPC has engaged with ANR regarding changes to River Corridor policies and related statewide incentive programs. The LCPC assisted with municipal outreach regarding the new 3 Acre Rule and General Stormwater Permit. The LCPC also began working with partner RPCs (NRPC, CVRPC,

CCRPC) to outreach to water quality partners regarding the proposed establishment of Clean Water Service Providers in the Lamoille and Winooski Basin.

- Conducted outreach to Lamoille County municipalities regarding the update of the Lamoille Tactical Basin Plan. The LCPC also conducted outreach to regional partners and the Town of Stowe while providing feedback for the Winooski Tactical Basin Plan Interim Report.
- Assisted the Town of Cambridge in hiring a consultant to develop a Stormwater Master Plan for Jeffersonville and Cambridge Village. The study focused on preliminary design planning for stormwater runoff hot spots identified by the community and in the assessment.
- Expanded the LCPC's hydrological model to further evaluate flood mitigation options in Johnson, Cambridge, and Wolcott.
- Provided project development and landowner outreach for floodplain restoration projects in the towns of Cambridge, Wolcott, Johnson, and in Jeffersonville Village.
- Secured Clean Water Block Grant funds for two other floodplain restoration projects - one in Jeffersonville near the confluence of the Brewster and Lamoille Rivers, and two in Wolcott along the Lamoille River and Wild Branch.
- Enhanced flood mitigation efforts along the Wild Branch in Wolcott, by utilizing funding under a 2020 USDA Technical Assistance Grant to evaluate floodplain restoration/erosion control alternatives along North Wolcott Road.
- Worked with Stowe to review and revise flood hazard bylaws.
- Assisted the town of Johnson in exploring funding to further the design for replacing the Scribner Bridge and exploring flood mitigation alternatives such as flood chutes to mitigate flooding in downtown Johnson.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

The Lamoille County Planning Commission helped the Town of Cambridge secure a Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) for the recently acquired Krusch Nature Preserve. The Preserve is 51 acres of mixed forest, meadow, and wetland that gives access to the Cambridge State Forest. The MPG will help the Town develop a Management Plan for the Preserve, as well as develop interpretive signs to help visitors appreciate the varied landscape of the area. The Preserve is currently open to visitors, although trails are still being constructed and bridges need to be installed over two streams that cut through the Preserve before the official opening.

The LCPC staff continues to work with the Smugglers' Notch Partnership. The Boardwalk at Barnes Camp continues to be a major attraction for locals and visitors to the Notch. The LCPC is actively working to finalize plans for parking and stormwater improvements for VT108 within Smugglers' Notch State Park, with construction planned in 2022. The project will replace hazardous shoulder parking that is damaging the Notch's fragile ecosystem with formal parking areas in less environmentally sensitive areas of the Notch. The project will reduce erosion of headwater streams and reduce the amount of sediment and phosphorous entering the watershed.

In partnership with the Town of Stowe and the Green Mountain Club, the LCPC also secured a Small Bike/Ped Grant from VTrans to install a much-needed crosswalk in front of the Barnes Camp Visitors' Center. The crosswalk is scheduled for construction in early 2022. LCPC also participated in a safety planning effort with VTrans to address the perennial challenge of tractor trailer trucks becoming stuck in the narrow curves of Smugglers' Notch.

The Lamoille County Planning Commission specializes in taking the planning process from concept through to implementation and construction. In Cambridge and Jeffersonville, ongoing severe flooding was addressed through analysis and then construction of a new bridge in Jeffersonville and a new culvert under Route 15 in the village of Jeffersonville. Modeling the Lamoille River was a key element from planning to implementation.

Starting in 2015, the LCPC has worked with communities along the Lamoille River Main Stem to develop a hydraulic model of the Lamoille River Main Stem. The model is designed to show floodwater levels during various-sized storm events. The model can also show the impacts of structures, such as roads and bridges, on upstream and downstream flood levels. The model was used to identify major flood mitigation projects in Cambridge and Jeffersonville, which prevented significant damages in the 2019 flood. In the past year, the model was used to identify opportunities to allow for redevelopment while maintaining or lowering flood levels in Johnson Village. The LCPC is now working with municipal leaders and property owners to move forward with several promising options. The model is also being used to design two major floodplain restoration projects in the Town of Wolcott, which will reduce flooding on important town roads while also providing important habitat and removing significant amounts of sediment and phosphorous from the water shed. The model is a public document available to any community. Every time the model is used for a community project, additional data is added, making it more accurate and valuable for the Region.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

The Lamoille County Planning Commission continually updates internal financial processes and procedures to ensure compliance with all federal, state and grant requirements. The LCPC recently updated both the Personnel and Procurement Policies to be in conformance with all State and Federal statutory changes. The LCPC is audited on an annual basis. The Organization received a clean audit for 2020, conducted a fraud risk assessment in 2019, and reviews all policies and practices on an ongoing basis.

The LCPC continued to actively engage in Board recruitment resulting in more board seats being filled from a diversity of municipalities and a newly energized and engaged board. The LCPC also updated the new Board Member Handbook and assisted in training new Board members.

The Board of the LCPC recently created a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) committee of the Board. The Board is committed to ensuring that the LCPC is fully inclusive in seeking public input, that all policies and practices recognize diversity, and that the upcoming update to the Regional Plan reflects the entire community and its future.

The LCPC receives most of its funding through grants, and through performance-based contracts with the state. Town assessments constitute a small, but very important, percentage of our funding.

Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant & Northern Vermont Economic Development District).

For the 2021 fiscal year, the LCPC's total projected revenue of approximately \$950,000 was derived from a mix of regional project grant funding, municipal project grant funding, state performance contract funding, non-profit organization grants, federal economic development funding, and a small amount from town assessments.

Virtually all of the LCPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. The commission's performance contract with the state is also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable us to work with municipalities on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, water quality, energy, and natural resources.

### **'AT WORK' MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the LCPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# LCPC at Work: FY 2021

## Projects

-  Bridge and Culvert Inventory
-  Brownfield
-  Clean Water
-  Economic Development
-  Energy Planning & Implementation
-  Emergency Planning
-  Grant Writing
-  Mapping
-  Planning and Zoning
-  Road Erosion Inventory
-  Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

## Designation

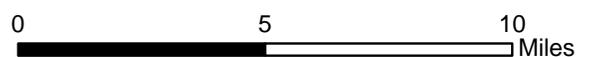
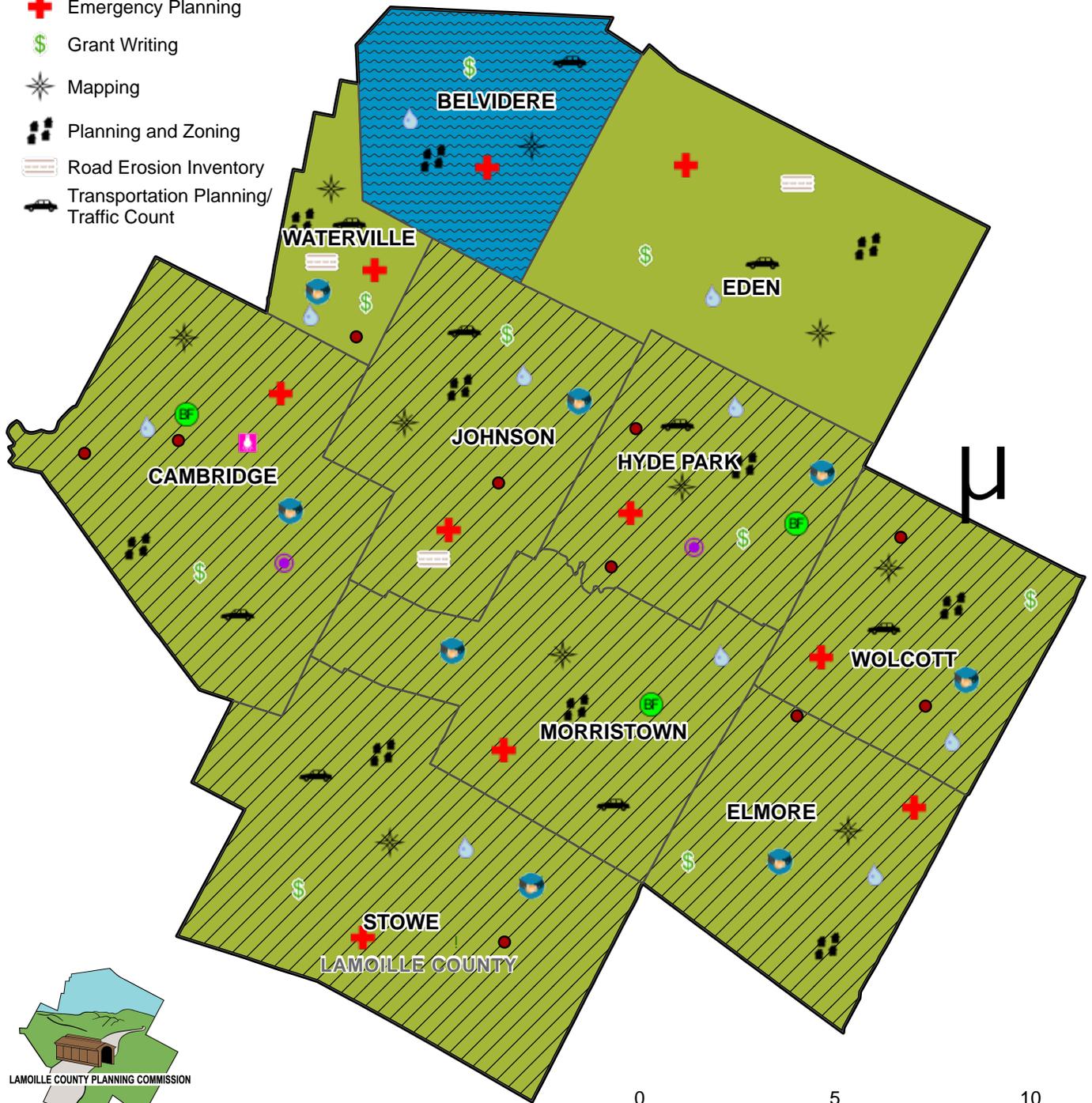
-  Designated Downtown
-  Designated Village

## Municipal Bylaw Status

-  Adopted
-  Flood Only
-  None

## Municipal Plan Status

-  Current
-  Expired



# Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

In FY 2021, the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission changed our name to Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC). The Regional Commission is a compact of ten (10) municipalities in east-central Vermont. It was founded in 1966, and is a political subdivision of state government organized under 24 V.S.A. Sub-Chapter 3. The MARC serves the towns of Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor. The MARC's activities and programs are governed by a ten-person Board of Commissioners; each appointed by the legislative body of his or her member town, with assistance from up to three "at-large" Commissioners as appointed by the Board of Commissioners. In addition, the Board has the responsibility of hiring staff to carry out the goals and policies of the MARC.

The primary intent of the MARC and its advisory committees has always been to assist with and advocate for the planning and development activities of its member towns. The MARC exists primarily to provide technical assistance to its member towns; assist in mediating inter-jurisdictional planning and development issues that arise between member communities; facilitate discussion and understanding between local and state entities; develop plans, policies, strategies, and procedures for addressing issues that are regional in scope; assist communities with downtown revitalization and community development projects; annually compile, review, and prioritize regional transportation improvement projects for submission to the Agency of Transportation; and to serve as an information resource for member towns and residents.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, and implementing newer requirements to address forest fragmentation, economic development and resiliency planning. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Provided a range of services to assist with municipal plan updates for Reading.
- Helped planning commissions to prepare zoning bylaw updates in Chester, Ludlow and Springfield.
- Assisted with local efforts to implement municipal plans and supporting plans, including in Chester, Ludlow and Springfield.
- Assisting Ludlow to develop a Village Center Master Plan.

### **REGIONAL PLANNING**

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- The Regional Plan was adopted on November 18, 2014 and amended on June 25, 2018. We continue to prepare and refine Regional Plan updates to natural resources and other chapters with our Regional Plan Committee and based on stakeholder input.
- Worked with partners to develop the Keys to the Valley housing study for the MARC, TRORC and UVLSRPC regions combined.
- Efforts this year to implement the Regional Plan included the following activities:
  - Reviewed Act 250 applications and Section 248 petitions as each relates to goals and policies in the Regional Plan.
  - Assisted towns to address recommendations for planning infrastructure improvements, such as engineering evaluations for village wastewater solutions.
  - Supported multi-town efforts to implement recommendations for enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities in Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor.

## **BROWNFIELDS**

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over 10 million dollars for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments and clean-up allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

- Provided brownfields assistance for 10 properties in 3 towns this fiscal year:
  - Windsor: 11 River Street, Rogers Fabricare at 7 Maple St., Levesque Property at 24 Depot St.;
  - West Windsor: Burke Garage;
  - Springfield: 16-20 Park Street, Park Street School, Woolson Block, 23-25 Main St., 27-31 Main St., Comtu, Jones and Lamson #1.
- The MARC continues to work with Springfield Regional Development Corporation on the assessment, and cleanup of various properties and with the Town of Springfield as Administrator for their Brownfields EPA Assessment Grant Program.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. To this end, RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- Provided technical assistance to several underserved broadband communities, including portions of Baltimore, Cavendish, Ludlow, Weathersfield and Windsor; working with ad hoc groups and Internet providers to improve Internet speed and reliability.
- Provided technical assistance to local governments with economic recovery efforts in the wake of COVID-19.
- Supported increased availability and access to quality and affordable health care services and wellness / preventative practices for all populations.
- Supported education and programming around issues of substance misuse and recovery-friendly communities. Assisted in drafting, presenting and disseminating “Local Planning for

Food Access” a toolkit that focuses on improving food access through municipal and regional plans.

- CDBG administration for the Woolson Block (Springfield) project.
- Supported Springfield’s redevelopment efforts for the Park Street School and 100 River Street.
- Supported downtown revitalization efforts in Springfield and Windsor, and village revitalization initiatives in Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Weathersfield and West Windsor.

## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

<b>Objective 1</b>		
<b>Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities</b>		
A	# of TAC meetings held	7
B	# of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning	14
C	# of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning	10
D	# of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans	10
<b>Objective 2</b>		
<b>Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning</b>		
E	# of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)	1
F	# of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	0
G	# of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	1
H	# of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers	2
I	# of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation	3
J	# of regions participating in Project Prioritization	1
<b>Objective 3</b>		
<b>Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities</b>		
K	# of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually	3
L	# of municipalities assisted with transportation related grants	6
M	% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance	40%
N	# of municipal transportation inventories conducted	0
O	# of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken	0
P	# of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan	2

Q	# of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources	4
<b>Objective 4</b>		
<b>Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans</b>		
R	# of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans	139
<b>Objective 5</b>		
<b>Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education</b>		
	MARC updated and adopted our Title VI Plan. This process involved close coordination with VTrans Civil Rights and Labor Compliance staff. MARC's board decided to expand the protected classes in our Title VI Plan.	

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State’s four Public Safety Districts. RPC’s also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assisted as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters.

- Ten municipalities in the region (100%) currently have adopted hazard mitigation plans. Two towns, Chester and Windsor, drafted and adopted revised plans during FY21.
- Nine municipalities in the region (90%) currently have an updated Local Emergency Management Plan.
- Served as Local Liaison during storm events.
- Virtually staffed the SEOC.
- Assisted Ludlow with the Commonwealth Avenue stormwater project.
- Continued to provide guidance to municipalities with flood hazard review, and river corridors, as requested.

## GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPC’s provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Highlights of activities:
  - Prepared maps for regional plan, municipal plans, zoning bylaws and other planning projects.
  - Assisted VTrans with Phase 3 updates to the Transportation Resilience Planning Tool.
  - Assisted project partners to develop an interactive online mapping platform for the Keys to the Valley multi-region housing project.
  - Continued to integrate “Collector for ArcGIS” into regular fieldwork activities, including MRGP related erosion inventories.

## ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Continued to assist local energy committee and other municipal officials to implement energy plans.
- Facilitated roundtable meetings for local energy committee members to network.
- Hosted a Button Up workshop to promote weatherization efforts.
- Updated our energy program webpage to improve access to up-to-date energy planning information.
- Participated in the review process for 6 energy projects (Section 248).
- Continued to provide guidance to local officials on Act 174 and enhanced local energy plans.
- Assisted the Town of Reading to prepare an enhanced energy plan.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with drafting and implementation of EPA-required tactical basin plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Supported the efforts of 8 towns to implement road drainage improvements under the Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid Program. These projects assist towns in achieving compliance with the road drainage standards established under the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP).
- Assisted the Town of Springfield to secure funding and provide project management services for:
  - Completing construction of drainage improvements along Lincoln Street to divert runoff away from a bank failure to reduce the rate of soil erosion and associated sediment loading in Mile Brook.
  - Engineering design in support of removal of the Springfield Reservoir Dam.
  - Engineering design in support of a slope failure remediation between Lincoln Street and Valley Street.
- Provided project management services to the Town of Windsor to support engineering design of stormwater improvements to mitigate erosion in Paradise Park.
- Provided grant writing assistance and project management services to the Town of Ludlow to complete a stormwater master plan and 12 conceptual design plans for high priority projects.
- Continued to assist municipalities to better understand flood resiliency and to consider adoption of the ANR model river corridor bylaws and flood hazard regulations, including the Town of Springfield.
- Began administering a Block Grant of about \$1,200,000 from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources to support engineering and construction of clean water projects throughout the state.

- Supported ANR with public outreach and development of the Basin 11 (West, Williams and Saxtons Rivers) Tactical Basin Plan.
- Assisted the Town of Ludlow and Lake Rescue Association in scoping and engineering projects to reduce sediment loads from gravel roads to Lake Rescue.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

- Worked with the Legislature and Governor’s Office to fund a key priority brownfield redevelopment project, which involves \$3.45 million to demolish the Jones and Lamson building in Springfield.
- Coordinating with partners to develop a housing project behind the diner in downtown Windsor.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

The MARC is funded by performance and project contracts with federal, state and local levels of government, foundation support, and contributions from member municipalities. MARC’s FY 2021 budget was approximately \$1,317,441. Core funding provided by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development of \$206,311 leveraged \$323,862 in additional federal sources.

MARC has an annual independent audit conducted by certified public accountants. A single audit was not necessary for fiscal year 2021.

MARC serves 10 municipalities and operates with a Board of Directors that develop and implement policy and oversee a staff of 14.

## **‘AT WORK’ MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the MARC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# MARC at Work: FY 2021

## Projects

-  Bridge and Culvert Inventory
-  Brownfield
-  Clean Water
-  Economic Development
-  Energy Planning & Implementation
-  Emergency Planning
-  Grant Writing
-  Healthy Communities
-  Mapping
-  Planning and Zoning
-  Road Erosion Inventory
-  Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

## Designation

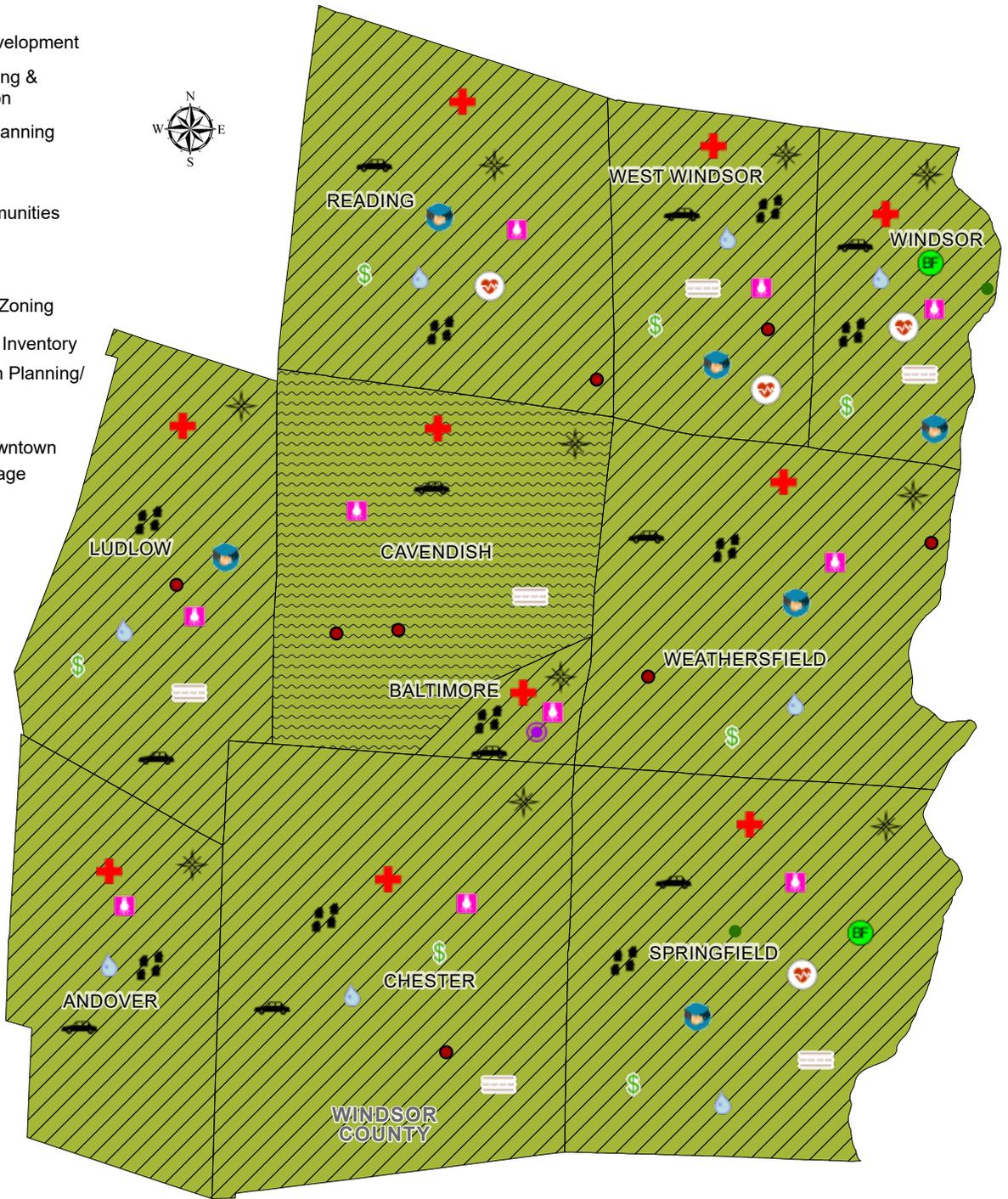
-  Designated Downtown
-  Designated Village

## Town Bylaw Status

-  Adopted
-  Flood Only

## Town Plan Status

-  Current



0 5 10 Miles



# Northeastern Vermont Development Association

## FY 2021 Annual Report

NVDA serves Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, which encompasses Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties. Although it's traditionally viewed as the most rural part of a rural state, the Northeast Kingdom is VAPDA's largest service area, covering 50 municipalities and approximately one-fifth of the state's land mass. And despite our uniquely rural status, this is hardly the simple life: Our region contains two labor market areas, two designated downtowns, 41 Designated Village Centers, three Opportunity Zones, one USDA-designated economic area, and seven tactical basin planning areas. Because NVDA serves as the regional planning commission and economic development corporation, our staff often wear multiple hats when assisting a member community.

This year, despite the ongoing challenges of COVID, we delivered thousands of hours of technical assistance in service of our mission: "to improve the quality of life in the Northeast Kingdom through planning, promoting economic development, and preserving the region's natural environment."

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

Our communities have a time-honored commitment to planning. As of September 1, we have 42 municipalities with current municipal plans – surpassing last year's record high! Despite our rural status, we also have 34 municipalities with zoning.

Only a handful of our municipalities have dedicated planning staff, so the needs of our region are extensive. In FY2021, our planning staff was able to continue providing virtual, socially distanced support to help communities rebound from the impacts of COVID 119. Here is a sampling of our planning activities in FY2021:

- NVDA staff helped obtain the following Village Center Designations: North Danville, Glover, West Glover, Troy and North Troy. Bustling downtown Hardwick, the site of important economic development investments, is now pursuing Downtown Designation, and NVDA staff stands ready to provide whatever support is needed. The Village Center and Downtown Designation programs remains immensely popular with our communities, and a record number of communities pursued tax credits for community and economic development projects this year. In FY2021 (July 2020 and January 2021), the downtown board allocated \$130,746 in tax incentives for five projects, supporting more than \$1.2 million in downtown and village center revitalization projects in the Northeast Kingdom. Also, during FY2021, NVDA provided direct assistance with application development to five Northeast Kingdom businesses, all of which were awarded tax credits in FY2022. A total of 10 Northeast Kingdom projects in the communities of Barton, Danville, Hardwick, Glover, Lyndonville, Peacham, and St. Johnsbury, had projects awarded funding through the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits Program n July of 2021 with over 40% of Program funding going to the Northeast Kingdom!
- Municipal Planning Grants continue to fund a vital element of our service delivery, and our municipalities rely heavily on this grant program to establish vibrant and resilient communities. In FY2021, we helped Newport City obtain technical assistance to embark on an ambitious community visioning effort that will result in the first major update to the municipal plan in nearly two decades. We also worked with the Town of Westfield to

complete a housing study of potential reuses for a now-closed assisted living facility. The grant was completed in the spring of this year, and the site is already under redevelopment! Also, staff wrote a grant on behalf of a multi-town consortium to fund a feasibility study for regional fire-protection services. The Northeast Kingdom Consortium Regional Fire Services Feasibility Study was completed in the Spring of 2021, and NVDA continues to facilitate meetings among the seven towns to discuss implementation of the study's recommendations. Also in FY2021, NVDA helped the Towns of Concord and Troy obtain Municipal Planning Grants for zoning regulation updates, including a focus on "zoning for great neighborhoods," and helped Greensboro obtain a grant for targeted master planning to prepare for the arrival of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail in Greensboro Bend.

- NVDA provides ongoing technical assistance to the Town of St. Johnsbury in implementing its riverfront master plan and its various housing initiatives. NVDA staff assisted the Town in obtaining a 2021 State Economic & Infrastructure Development (SEID) grant in order to complete additional riverfront trail sections connecting the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail to the new trailhead picnic pavilion on Bay Street in the designated downtown.
- An NVDA staff member serves on the advisory committee for the St. Johnsbury Rental Housing Improvement Grant Program, which continues to award matching grants to rental property owners to help improve the overall quality of the rental housing stock in town.
- This year NVDA staff assisted the Town of Lyndon with a successful Better Connections Program grant application. The BC program provides technical assistance and funds to local communities for planning efforts to increase multi-modal transportation options and improve land use, water quality, public health, and economic vitality in Vermont communities. In March of 2021 the Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) awarded \$105,000 to the Town to develop a Village Route 5 Corridor Master Plan to improve the safety, walkability, and vibrancy of the Town's historic commercial center. These revitalization efforts will be paired with a downtown land use and market analysis to help prioritize infrastructure investments and create a redevelopment plan for Lyndonville's downtown commercial corridor. The project will address the current lack of connectivity between northern Main St. and the Designated Village Center, transportation safety issues, land use issues, storefront vacancies, redevelopment opportunities, and key stormwater runoff issues at the intersection of US RT5 and VT RTS 114 and 122. Lyndon will have a year and a half to complete this project and NVDA will continue to support the Master Plan development by serving as the local project manager throughout FY2022.
- This year, our staff assisted with the update and adoption of municipal plans for the towns of Norton, Troy, and Brunswick, and the Unified Towns and Gores. In FY 2021, NVDA assisted the Unified Towns and Gores and the Town of Jay and Concord with zoning amendments, and the Towns of St. Johnsbury, Glover, and Craftsbury with amendments to their existing plans to include "enhanced" energy plans.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. NVDA's plan, which was last amended in 2018 to meet the enhanced energy planning requirements of Act 174, helps guide local planning efforts by offering extensive data and perspective. ([www.nvda.net/regional-plan.php](http://www.nvda.net/regional-plan.php))

- NVDA staff help to further regional interests by serving on statewide boards. In FY2021, an NVDA staff member joined the board of the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative and will serve on its Enterprise Finance Options Committee. The Working Lands Enterprise Grant program remains an important tool for helping our local communities and businesses expand opportunities for agriculture and forest-related enterprises. An NVDA staff member also continues to serve on the Board of the Vermont Community Development Association, which strives to establish a series of meaningful educational forums on timely issues such as affordable housing, renewable energy, downtown development, and age-friendly communities.
- NVDA staff also serve on the Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital Community Health Needs assessment steering committee. This committee works with communities and school districts served by NVRH to address health issues, including impacts from the COVID-19 crisis. The committee conducted several outreach surveys, providing input to help the hospital better align its services with the needs of the region.
- NVDA continued working on an update of our Regional Transportation Plan. The update is essential to address the widespread impacts of the pandemic on our residents and businesses with regards to transportation. The state's Comprehensive Energy Strategy calls for a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions, and COVID has shown us that improved telecommuting capacity can reduce VMTs. NVDA is working to complete the region's "last mile" to support more businesses and workers. The transportation planning and Essex County economic recovery teams have been focused on filling the gaps in our broadband infrastructure. The transportation planning team is also working to make our communities more accessible, sustainable and attractive to economic development through improved pedestrian and biking infrastructure to support our residents needs and improved quality of life. All these issues are addressed in our Regional Transportation Plan update.

## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In FY2021, NVDA's technical assistance was largely focused on accelerating economic recovery. We continued our expanded outreach through newsletters, web site, social media, and participation in state and regional recovery efforts and worked to ensure that local businesses were able to access CARES Act relief resources.

- When COVID-19 hit, to relieve pressure on businesses and organizations, the RDCs of Vermont launched the Restart Vermont Technical Assistance (ReVTA) Program. This original program was designed to deliver critically important technical assistance to hundreds of businesses and organizations trying to adapt to new practices, retrofit their physical spaces, and access new

technology. Through the ReVTA Program NVDA provided over \$80,000 in technical assistance to 32 Northeast Kingdom businesses. Individual grants averaged \$2,535 and were dispersed across a total of 35 projects. Of the 235 projects, 22 were contracted with a technical assistance provider located within our region, which represents over \$50,000 (70% of total) work for local vendors. Although the ReVTA Program ended in December 2020, NVDA was recently awarded a \$99,000 in USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) to administer a similar technical assistance program for Northeast Kingdom businesses in FY2022. Through this new technical assistance program NVDA will continue to engage businesses impacted by the pandemic to establish recovery solutions and identify appropriate technical assistance providers and a technical assistance scope of work. Examples of technical assistance projects include but are not limited to assistance for business operations; financial management; digital strategies; architecture and design; re-configuring products or processes; updating safety measures; technology and software consulting; marketing services; business pivot consulting services; and legal or professional services. NVDA also received a Regional Economic Development Grant through VT Buildings & General Services for a community market in Glover, and 3 other applications were submitted for projects in Newport and St. Johnsbury.

- NVDA has been working with our Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) partners since January 2021 to create the NVEDD Recovery Plan. The plan will address recovery priorities in 12 different areas including the following: 1) Broadband; 2) Housing; 3) Diversity and Equity; 4) Water and Sewer; 5) Childcare; 6) Business Support; 7) Transportation; 8) Civic and Cultural infrastructure; 8) Outdoor Economy and Recreation; 10) Agriculture, Working Lands, and Food Systems; 11) Education and Workforce Development; 12) Climate Change and Resiliency. The Plan addresses the need for work in each recovery priority, provides specific strategies to address recovery needs, and identifies quantifiable metrics for success. The Plan is on track to be adopted by the NVEDD Board this Fall. NVDA has also participated in the NEK Collaborative's regional recovery planning effort.
- Efforts to establish the Hardwick Yellow Barn Business Accelerator intensified in FY2021, when an updated construction estimate attributed at least \$1.3 million in cost increases to market disruptions from COVID. Staff worked hard to close the budget gap and obtained a \$1 million grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission Regional Forest Economy Partnership. The project is back on track for a fall construction start date. When completed, the project will be responsible for the direct creation of at least 50 jobs in the Hardwick area.
- In October 2020, NVDA was awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission to advance the outdoor recreation economy in the Northeast Kingdom. Most funds were to be sub-awarded to local recreation-based projects throughout the 3-county region. Working in partnership with the Northern Forest Center and the NEK Collaborative, NVDA was able to award funding to 6 projects in May 2021. Funds will go to the Town of St. Johnsbury (town forest trail improvements); Town of Hardwick (community trail improvements and LVRT access); Albany Community School (pump track, skills park, and beginner mountain bike trails); Old Stone House (outdoor art trail); Lyndon Outing Club (mountain bike trails and skills park); Kingdom Trail Association (safe road and trail crossings). A second round of grants will be available in 2022, and other NBRC funding will be used to advance regional marketing of the Northeast Kingdom.

- Throughout FY2021, NVDA continued to provide funding support through grants for our region's Communications Union District, NEK Community Broadband. Feasibility and business planning work has been completed and buildout plans are in the development process.
- In the fall of 2020, the Northeast Kingdom received funding from the Vermont Community Foundation to work directly with the Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) to assess the region's existing digital economy ecosystem (DEE) and develop and refine inclusive DEE building strategies with the goal of creating quality digital jobs and increasing local wealth by supporting local tech startups. CORI has successfully implemented this model in many rural communities throughout the country, including the development of the Black River Innovation Campus in Springfield Vermont. NVDA will continue to work with the CORI team in FY2022 to seek federal funding to support this work, including the EDA's Build to Scale Venture Challenge, which provides up to \$1.5M for over three years, with a 1:1 non-federal match. Additionally, as a result of our DEE assessment and strategy development work, the Northeast Kingdom is now a member of CORI's Rural Innovation Network, which will provide ongoing assistance with implementation of our DEE strategy as well as opportunities to connect and share resources with other RIN communities throughout the country.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Regional Planning Commissions coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) through a contract with VTrans. This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. The regional planning commissions serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement. This year, we have had to pivot to appropriate format for TAC meetings, as well as Road Foreman meetings, which provide important training on best practices, regulatory compliance and funding opportunities.

- NVDA facilitates a regional Rivers and Roads Working group made up of DEC Staff, County Conservation District Managers, VTrans Maintenance District Staff, and other regional partners. We continue to assist municipalities with various aspects of stormwater mitigation related to town highways and private landowner access issues related to stormwater.
- NVDA also works closely with the non-profit service provider, Rural Community Transportation (RCT), which uses multiple modes of transportation to serve the region: buses, wheelchair accessible vans, taxis, and volunteer drivers. NVDA serves on the RCT Board of Directors, where we leverage our many partnerships and collaborations throughout our region to benefit public transit and improve the transportation opportunities for the least fortunate and most in-need citizens. RCT is also making efforts to bring awareness of transportation services to the general population. NVDA staff also facilitates, along with Lamoille County Planning Commission, a working committee to coordinate serves for the elders and persons with disabilities program to assist RCT and our regional service providers to increase transportation services to health care, socialization and quality of life activities.

Here are our accomplishments, as they relate to Transportation Planning Initiative Work Program:

**Objective 1: Enhance cooperation and coordination between VTrans, RPC regions, and municipalities.**

- 5 TAC meetings held
- 2 non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning
- 45 municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning
- 7 RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans

**Objective 2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

- Regional transportation plan that is current (within 8 years) – note our plan, last updated in 2018, is current, but being updated now
- 1 Act 25 applications with regional planning commission comments relating to transportation
- 0 Section 248 applications with regional planning commission comments relating to transportation
- 4 coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers
- 0 VTrans committees that involve regional planning commission staff participation
- Participation in project prioritization

**Objective 3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

- 0 municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually
- 6 municipalities assisted with transportation related grants
- 45% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance
- 3 municipal transportation inventories conducted
- 1 municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken
- municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan
- 2 road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources

**Objective 4: Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans**

- 50 data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans

**Objective 5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education**

- See above: Rivers and Roads, etc.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCE**

The regional planning commissions play a key role in emergency management through its work with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Agency of Natural Resources. We focus primarily of mitigation and preparedness, so we work with each community to identify vulnerabilities and actions to eliminate or lessen the risk. NVDA staff work with member communities to write and update flood hazard regulations, prepare FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans, and coordinate updates to local plans.

We also assist during response and recovery in larger-scale events, such as federally declared disasters.

- Throughout the COVID response, NVDA staff has participated in numerous conference calls and Zoom and Teams meetings. We have also monitored the Governor’s press conferences to keep our communities informed.
- Every community is required to have an updated Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP). NVDA staff assisted every municipality in our region with the update and adoption process. We currently have 46 communities with adopted LEMPs for FY2021, and two more are pending adoption.
- Local Hazard Mitigation Plans identify predominant risks to a community and identify ways to lessen their impacts. They are required for any community seeking FEMA hazard mitigation funds. In recent years, the requirements for the plan have become fairly extensive. This year, NVDA helped the following municipalities with preparation of Local Hazard Mitigation Plans: Derby, Burke, Sutton, Sheffield, Wheelock, Groton, Westfield, Troy, Danville, Maidstone, Craftsbury, and Ryegate. Derby, Burke, Sutton, Sheffield, and Wheelock plans have received approval from Vermont Emergency Management and are already in effect.
- NVDA staff continue to participate in special planning exercises, such as the Great Bay Hydro Corp. Dam Emergency Action Seminar which is held annually in December. The pandemic forced training exercises to shift to an on-line environment. NVDA staff participated in the Training, Exercise and Planning workshop (virtually) hosted by Vermont Emergency Management, and the Emergency Preparedness Conference.
- NVDA staff worked with Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) 9 and 10 as they transitioned to the single Regional Emergency Management Committee on July 1 of this year. Additionally, there will be one statewide LEPC, and a member of NVDA’s staff will serve on it.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) SERVICES**

GIS mapping is an integral component of NVDA technical service offerings in planning and economic development. Our mapping supports planners and community development initiatives by providing geographical and spatial analysis.

- Our mapping is essential for proposed and existing designated village centers. Because we use a format acceptable to the Village Center Designation board, our municipalities can easily apply to this popular program. (*See Municipal Planning and Implementation*)
- We continue to provide maps for town plans to depict land use and well as development patterns and constraints to development. We also provided zoning bylaw district maps. Our zoning formats include wall-sized and ledger-sized (for easy download and remote printing.)

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

NVDA's regional energy plan provides a blueprint for reaching the ambitious goals of the statewide Comprehensive Energy Plan: to meet 90% of our energy needs through the use of renewables by the year 2050. To date, 15 municipalities in our region have adopted similar plans authorized under Act 174. More communities are working on enhanced local energy plans as well. In FY2021, much of our work was focused on putting regional and local plans into action:

- Successful implementation of energy plans largely depends on personal choices, not regulatory initiatives, such as weatherizing homes and businesses and switching to cleaning burning fuel sources. Outreach and education, therefore, are central to NVDA's implementation strategy. In F2021, NVDA pivoted to virtual programming, yielding strong results. In July, our webinar on Heat Pumps drew 100+ attendees. In the fall of 2020, our webinar series on affordable "regenerative" housing (i.e., ultra-efficient net-positive housing) drew 35-50 attendees over multiple days. Putting cutting-edge energy efficiency within reach of young families and members of the workforce was clearly a hot button issue in the NEK. NVDA was invited to make a pitch on this concept at the EAN Energy Summit. In October, we partnered with Efficiency Vermont to promote a virtual "Step Up to Button Up." We reached new audiences through online programming during the pandemic. Webinars will certainly remain an important outreach tool in the coming year, even after social distancing requirements are relaxed.
- NVDA's extensive network of partnerships is especially critical for delivering education and empowerment to local communities. In FY2021, we worked closely with HEAT Squad, Vermont Natural Resources Council, Efficiency Vermont, and the Energy Action Network. We look forward to strengthening these partnerships in the coming year.
- NVDA's Energy Newsletter continued to be a popular communications vehicle for local energy committees, planning commissions, local businesses, and individuals with a passionate interest in combating climate change. In FY2021 the newsletters became more frequent, and we expect to send them out monthly in FY2022.
- NVDA staff is also closely involved in statewide planning efforts. Our executive director serves on the Climate Action Council, and a senior planner has been serving on a subcommittee that meets with the Department of Public Service biweekly to evaluate enhanced energy planning standards under Act 174.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

Nonpoint source pollution, such as phosphorous loading, remains a key concern throughout the state. NVDA's watershed planner engages in partnerships with state agencies, municipalities, and various public and private organizations to achieve holistic solutions. It's all tall order because our region, which covers one-fifth of the state's land mass, encompasses seven basin planning areas. Two of these areas -- the Passumpsic and Memphremagog -- are completely contained in our region, so we do not share planning responsibilities with other regional planning commissions.

- NVDA's Water Quality Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing Tactical Basin Plans for conformance with NVDA's Regional Plan. These plans are important because they identify impaired

areas, as well as corrective measures to restore water quality. The plans are useful to local planning commissions as they provide insight into water quality issues in their respective communities. Our advisory committee had a busy year. Under NVDA staff direction, the four-member panel reviewed plans for the Upper Connecticut River Direct Tributaries Basin 16, Ompompanoosuc, Stevens, Wells, Waits, and Connecticut River Direct Tributaries Basin 14. We are currently engaged in assisting basin planners with updates to the Missisquoi River Basin 6, Lamoille River Basin 7, and Lake Memphremagog Basin 17.

- Regional planning commissions continued to partner with the DEC to implement best management projects to improve road segments through the DEC's Grants in Aid program. As the regional partner, NVDA manages each grant, performs an initial assessment of the road segment, and reassesses the road segment after the work is completed. Forty of our towns have participated in this program.
- Managing development in areas prone to flooding also is an important part of our water quality outreach. In FY2021, NVDA staff provided technical assistance to the town of Holland on flood hazard regulations.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

- NVDA's Executive Director serves on the board of the Northeast Kingdom Development Corporation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) that serves as a catalyst for economic development efforts in the region, especially those built on public-private partnerships. As the fiscal agent for the Hardwick Yellow Barn, NEKDC is the primary entity to secure more than \$4 million in bridge financing during the development of the project and the construction period. The NEKDC will form a non-profit subsidiary to be the recipient of the New Markets Credit (NMTC) financing at the conclusion of the construction period and will enter a long-term ground lease with the Town of Hardwick to manage the Hardwick Yellow Barn and sub-lease space to tenants. Other initiatives currently undertaken by the NEKDC include the anticipated acquisition and repurposing of a vacant 50,000 square foot manufacturing facility in Newport currently in federal receivership. The acquisitions and renovation of the building will allow NEKDC to lease space to a growing snow equipment business for sales, service, and distribution.
- The region's many historic and cultural facilities require special consideration and support for adaptive reuse. In FY2021, NVDA staff supported fundraising efforts of McIndoes Academy in Barnet. The 1853 structure, which has been on the National Register for Historic Places since the early 1970s, has extraordinary potential to become a bona fide community and cultural center serving the towns of southern Caledonia and the Connecticut River valley. Built in the Greek Revival tradition, the two-and-a-half story structure features a square belfry topped by a cupola in the center of the roof and an iconic front façade formed by a gabled four-column porch. The deep front setback from the road provides ample space for outdoor gatherings. The twin winding staircase in the front lobby lead to the second story Great Hall, which also has the capacity for accommodating civic and cultural programming. Also in FY2021, NVDA served on the historic Danville Train Station Committee, which is tasked with restoring the 1871 structure (recently determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places) into an alternative transportation and recreation hub along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. Staff

attended regular meetings and supported grant writing and fundraising efforts for rehabilitation of the structure, which currently houses the Town's recycling center.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

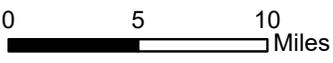
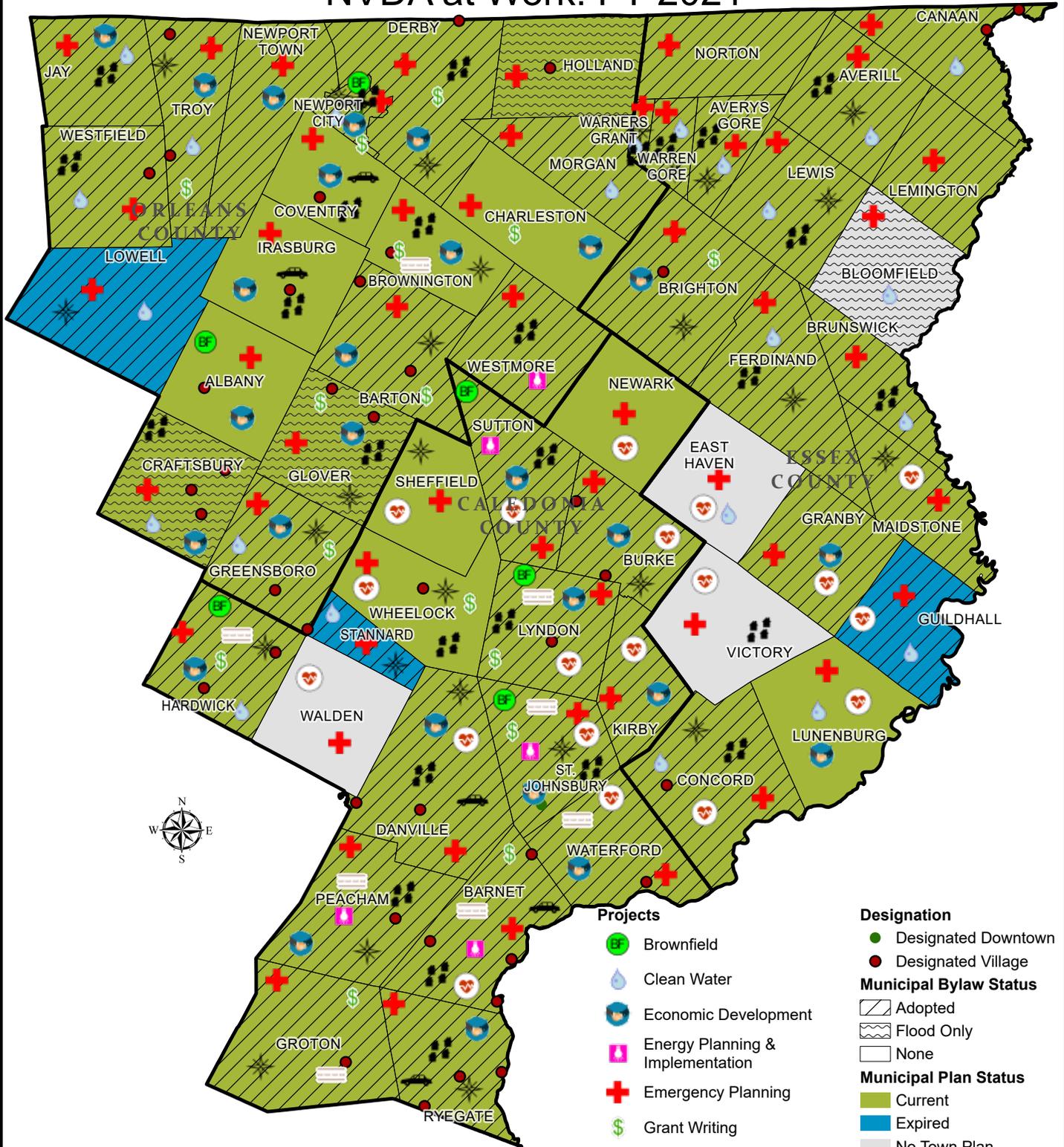
NVDA's revenues came from numerous sources, including a share of the state's property transfer funds; private, state, and federal grants; and annual appropriations from each of our 50+ member communities. We also received rental income from our multi-tenant buildings in St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville, and other income from contracted services, such as grant administration, as well as municipal plan and bylaw development, which is usually funded by Municipal Planning Grants.

- NVDA is an approved Non-Profit Community Development Organization, which allows us to operate a revolving loan fund recapitalized by loan repayments from previous economic development projects. In FY2021, NVDA provided a second time extension (2 months) for a loan repayment for a community store project as they were waiting for closeouts of grants to be processed.
- As with previous years, our most recent audit (FY2020) produced no significant findings. Our FY2021 audit will be made available at the end of the calendar year.
- NVDA continued the publication and distribution of its regular e-newsletters with a circulation of about 1,300. The e-newsletter went to a twice a month distribution schedule to keep readers informed of COVID-19 and economic recovery opportunity updates.
- NVDA's website is a reliable source of detailed information on each of its member municipalities. We make every effort to keep it up to date so that users can access and download current plans, bylaws, maps, and Census data.

## **'AT WORK' MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the NVDA to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# NVDA at Work: FY 2021



- |                 |   |                    |                               |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Projects</b> |   | <b>Designation</b> |                               |
|                 | Brownfield                                |                    | Designated Downtown           |
|                 | Clean Water                               |                    | Designated Village            |
|                 | Economic Development                      |                    | <b>Municipal Bylaw Status</b> |
|                 | Energy Planning & Implementation          |                    | Adopted                       |
|                 | Emergency Planning                        |                    | Flood Only                    |
|                 | Grant Writing                             |                    | None                          |
|                 | Healthy Communities                       |                    | <b>Municipal Plan Status</b>  |
|                 | Mapping                                   |                    | Current                       |
|                 | Planning and Zoning                       |                    | Expired                       |
|                 | Road Erosion Inventory                    |                    | No Town Plan                  |
|                 | Transportation Planning/<br>Traffic Count |                    | County Boundary               |



# Northwest Regional Planning Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) serves the 23 municipalities (19 towns, 3 incorporated villages, and 1 city) located in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties in northwestern Vermont.

Municipalities in the region appoint two representatives to serve on the Board of Commissioners. This board governs the policies and activities of the Commission and elects an Executive Committee and officers to oversee NRPC programs and staff. The Mission of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission is:

- To assist local municipalities, through education, technical assistance, grants and funding; and to aid municipalities in their planning efforts as authorized by Vermont planning laws.
- To serve as a center for information and as a resource to support the region and its municipalities' interests, growth patterns and common goals.
- To provide a forum for the discussion of issues which are regional in nature and/or unique to our area of the state, and to serve as a mediator to resolve conflicts as appropriate. Common sense and a spirit of compromise must be allowed to enter the discussion so that the impacts of development may be mitigated.
- To conduct regional planning programs.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and on-site training, bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing requirements for economic development and flood resiliency planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions, and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Completed workshops attended by municipal staff and volunteers from most municipalities. Topics included: Essentials of Land Use Planning, Zoning Administrator Roundtable, Special Topics in Planning and Open Meeting Law.
- Assisted the Town of Berkshire with updates to their municipal plan adopted in October 2020 and updates to their zoning bylaw.
- Assisted the Town of Fairfield with updates to their municipal plan with Municipal Planning Grant funding; plan adopted February 2021.
- Initiated Connecting Sheldon, a strategic planning effort to identify opportunities for bike/ped connections between village and recreation amenities, funded by a Municipal Planning Grant.
- Completed a Village Master Plan for the Town of North Hero. The project was funded by the Municipal Planning Grant Program.
- Provided planning and community outreach support to the Town of Highgate and their environmental consultant for a wastewater and water supply preliminary engineering analysis

for their Village Center, with focus on serving the Village Core property. This project is funded by a Municipal Planning Grant.

- Provided planning and community outreach support for the Town of Alburgh as part of a project to assess opportunities for recreation in an underutilized portion of the Alburgh Industrial Park. This project is funded by a Municipal Planning Grant.
- Assisted the Town of Fletcher with revisions to their Town Plan.
- Answered general planning and zoning technical assistance questions for Alburgh, Berkshire, Enosburgh, Enosburg Falls, Fairfax, Fairfield, Fletcher, Franklin, Georgia, Highgate, Montgomery, North Hero, Richford, Sheldon, St. Albans City, St. Albans Town, South Hero, and Swanton.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

The Northwest Regional Plan was amended by the Board of Commissioners in June 2017. The amended plan included a new energy element meant to comply with the new statutory requirements for regional “enhanced energy plans.” It also included adoption of the Regional Energy Plan by reference.

NRPC published an online indicator report with [regularly updated online data](#) to show progress on the goals of the regional plan.

NRPC reviews state permit applications to ensure proposed projects conform with the regional plan. The Project Review Committee reviewed six Section 248 applications and one Act 250 major applications (thirteen Act 250 minor applications) for conformance with the regional plan. The committee made final determinations on all projects and determined they conformed with the plan but in some cases offered comments and suggestions for permit conditions.

## BROWNFIELDS

Vermont RPCs have sought and have been awarded over \$10 million for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs and increase housing opportunities.

NRPC currently has 2 active EPA Brownfields grants, including one Revolving Loan Fund and one assessment grant which is split between hazardous materials and petroleum assessment. During FY19, the following projects were either finished, ongoing or started.

Assessment Projects:

- *Young Landfill, Highgate.* A prospective purchaser is working with the Town of Highgate on assessing the former Young Landfill for potential solar development to serve an adjacent industrial area. NRPC has coordinated acquiring site access for assessment on an adjacent property and is contributing funding to the remaining phase 2 assessment as the site.

- *74 Lower Welden Street (St. Albans Lower Welden Street Cooling Ponds), St. Albans City.* The City of St. Albans has purchased this former diesel electrical generation plant for the purpose of cleaning it up and using for stormwater treatment. NRPC has funded a phase 2 assessment this fiscal year.
- *24 Maple St. (Colony Square Apartments), St. Albans City.* NRPC has coordinated with a new prospective purchaser for 24 Maple Street, the former St. Albans Gas and Light coal gasification plant. NRPC assisted with BRELLA, communication with the current owner, understanding risks and liability and funding opportunities.
- *200 Bridge Street, Sheldon.* The Town of Sheldon in cooperation with the Sheldon Historical Society has entered the Brownfields Program with plans to renovate the building for use as a museum and office space and potential for improving the yard area, which borders the Black Creek for public use. This year, NRPC funded a supplemental phase 2 assessment and coordinated with stakeholders on next steps.
- *Enosburgh Armory.* NRPC funded a phase 1 assessment and phase 2 workplan for the Enosburgh Armory, which was purchased by the Town of Enosburgh for use as their new municipal offices.

#### Cleanup Projects:

- *26 Hutchins Street (Village Center Apartments), Morrisville.* 24 units of high-quality, well managed affordable housing will transform a blighted lot in the Village Center of Morrisville. 5 units will be available to homeless or at risk of homelessness households. NRPC's RLF is sub-granting \$36,484 and loaning \$19,565 towards cleanup at this site.
- *Maiden Lane Housing Development, St. Albans City.* New 30-unit subsidized affordable rental building and a 33-unit subsidized workforce rate building with common parking underground. Redevelopment is part of a larger "Congress and Main Redevelopment", which includes a new home for the Community College of Vermont, a Nurse Training Program, office and retail space. NRPC's RLF is funding \$398,000 in cleanup costs (\$100,000 of which is a sub-grant), which largely consists of soil disposal costs.
- *Montpelier Granite Works, Montpelier.* 15,000 +/- square foot commercial/ mixed use building on 1.6-acre site, the reuse of which is anticipated to generate 60 new jobs. NRPC's RLF contributed \$200,000 in loan funds to the cleanup required at this former granite foundry. The loan agreement was extended by a year due to delays related to the pandemic and in securing a tenant.

## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with municipalities and Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

NRPC coordinates the [Northern Vermont Economic Development District \(NVEDD\)](#) in partnership with the three RDCs and RPCs in the six northern counties. An advisory board helped to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that was approved by EDA and is updated [annually](#). NRPC serves as the administrative coordinator for NVEDD. NRPC provides grant administrative support for Northern Borders Regional Commission grantees.

Through an EDA pandemic recovery grant, the Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD) partners have 3 disaster recovery coordinators in the three Regional Planning Commissions in our district, and continue to provide technical assistance to local entities navigating economic recovery. NRPC continues to coordinate outreach to local officials and businesses and work with the NVEDD Board regarding the economic impacts of the pandemic.

- Assisted the City of St. Albans administer a VCDP Implementation Grant on behalf of the City of St. Albans for property acquisition and renovation of the Almond Blossoms Schoolhouse, enabling an expansion of a childcare facility
- Provided project management support to the Alburgh Family Clubhouse, a local 501c3 organization, for the construction of a new childcare center to be located on the Alburgh School campus. Assisted the Town of Alburgh administer a Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) Planning Grant for pre-development and planning work related to the construction of the new childcare facility. NRPC also assisted Alburgh School District administer a Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) grant to construct the new childcare facility.
- Provided NBRC administrative support to the Town of Fletcher for a Broadband project, and to the Town of Highgate for a water/wastewater expansion.
- Wrote a successful planning grant for the Town of Bakersfield for redevelopment of Brigham Academy for housing and community space.
- With an Economic Development Administration disaster resiliency grant, worked to complete agricultural resiliency projects including supporting local food distribution, developing an agricultural apprenticeship program in partnership with Community College of VT and area technical centers, expanding the gleaning program, and education for municipal officials on local actions to support agriculture.
- Wrote a successful planning grant for the Town of South Hero for predevelopment and planning work associated with a renovation of the historic South Hero Meeting House. Assisted the Town with grant management.
- Assisted the Town of Fairfield with applying for and managing a VCDP CARES Act grant to construct an outdoor pavilion at the Fairfield Community Center.
- Implemented the wayfinding and marketing plan for the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail through new kiosks, signage and trail amenities funded by a Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative grant.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

**Objective 1**

**Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

# of TAC meetings held	10
# of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning via the TAC meetings	2
# of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning	23
# of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans	8

**Objective 2**

**Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

# of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)	1
# of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	8
# of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	2
# of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers	3
# of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation	1
# of regions participating in Project Prioritization	1

**Objective 3**

**Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

# of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually	0
Total # of programs that RPCs municipalities assisted with transportation related grants	12
% of budget spent on municipal technical assistance	45
# of municipal transportation inventories conducted	0
# of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken	1
# of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan	2
# of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources	3

**Transportation Planning Highlights**

- NRPC hosted a meeting a meeting for municipal officials in Franklin County along the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail to coordinate on the upcoming trail construction season, identify future trailhead needs and to discuss economic opportunities related to the trail. In addition to municipality representatives, VTrans Municipal Assistance, VTrans Policy & Planning, VAST, LCPC and NVDA staff participated in the meeting.
- Implemented the wayfinding and marketing plan for the Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail by producing new brochures, a new website and trail friendly business program.

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, local Emergency Operations Centers, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning

Committees and coordination among Emergency Management Directors, Emergency Management Coordinators, first responders and planners throughout the State. RPC's also help update floodplain bylaws, write flood resiliency sections of municipal plans and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency operations plans and assist as needed in special circumstances such as the current Covid-19 Global Pandemic, the 2019 Halloween Storm, Tropical Storm Irene and the Lake Champlain Flood in 2011, and other state declared and local disasters. Twenty-one municipalities (95%) in the region currently have an updated local emergency management plan. Eighteen municipalities (90%) of municipalities in the region currently have a local hazard mitigation plan either adopted or under review. During the last fiscal year, NRPC:

- Staffed the Grand Isle County Mutual Aid Association Local Emergency Planning Committee within the region, as well as the greater St. Albans Area Incident Management team. The activities include improving capacity to respond to all- hazards incidents, ensuring that municipalities have hazard mitigation plans in place, and updating Local Emergency Management Plans (LEMPs).
- Served as the Local Liaison to municipalities for the Planning Section of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) following severe weather events. Duties include establishing direct contact with municipal EMDs /EMCs to assess damages, compiling damage assessments in coordination with Vermont Agency of Transportation and Department of Environmental Conservation and reporting local damages to the Planning Section of the SEOC.
- Staff supported the Planning and Engagement Sections of the SEOC in response to State of Emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021. Staff also assisted with Community Points of Distribution logistics for emergency food delivery in Franklin and Grand Isle.
- Staff held weekly local EMD conference calls during the pandemic for community information sharing and lessons learned for responding to and operating under Governor's Executive Order surrounding pandemic response.
- Served on the State Training and Exercise Planning Committee which oversees the three- year emergency Training and Exercise Plan.
- Served on the State Individual and Family Assistance Task Force which coordinates immediate and long-term recovery efforts to meet the basic housing and subsistence needs of affected individuals and families following a disaster.
- Provided data and information to municipalities for hazard mitigation grant program applications for transportation infrastructure improvements, emergency generators, home buyouts in hazardous areas and landslide risk analysis study.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Completed town plan & zoning maps for municipalities updating their plans and bylaws. Any new or updated zoning shapefiles are added to the Vermont Open Geodata Portal website yearly (<https://geodata.vermont.gov/>).
- Prepared and updated Village Designation Maps for communities seeking village designation and renewal.

- Completed [E911 Community Maps](#) for all municipalities for use by town officials, emergency responders and others.
- Printed and mailed out any VTrans Highway maps to municipalities that wanted an updated map.

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- NRPC Executive Director serves as the Rural Representative on the VT Climate Council and Co-Chairs the Rural Resiliency and Adaptation Subcommittee.
- Assisted the Towns of Berkshire and Fairfield with adopting enhanced energy plans.
- Assisted the town of Fairfax with review of charter language to establish an energy committee.
- Actively participated in the review of 2 large solar facilities and one grid-scale battery electric storage system seeking a Certificate of Public Good from the Public Utility Commission.
- Coordinated energy efficiency workshops and supported the development of local energy committees in coordination with Efficiency Vermont.
- Provided energy data to municipalities with enhanced energy plans to support ongoing local energy work.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans and implementation of the Lake Champlain and Lake Carmi TMDLs. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- Continued to work with towns developing water quality related language in town plans and bylaws related to shoreline, stream buffers, floodplain and river corridor regulations.
- Assisted the state's Watershed Coordinators with Plan development and implementation for the Northern Lake Champlain Basin.
- Reviewed the Northern Lake Champlain Basin Plan for conformance with the NRPC Regional Plan.
- Assisted the state's Watershed Coordinators with updating of Basin Plans for the Missisquoi and Lamoille watersheds.
- Continued management of 3 municipal stormwater projects with the DEC CWIP Year 1 Clean Water Block Grant program for the following municipalities: City of St. Albans, Town of St. Albans, Town of Franklin.
- Continued management of 4 stormwater projects with the DEC CWIP Year 2 Design Implementation Block Grant program for the following entities: City of St. Albans, Town of Richford (2 projects), Highgate Elementary.

- Completed a process to identify and develop public-private partnership projects to meet the new 3-acre stormwater general permit. Funded by the Department of Conservation through Watershed Consulting Associates.
- Continued project development for water quality improvement projects in partnership with multiple organizations (Regional Planning Commissions, Conservation Districts, local watershed organizations). Funded by a VT Department of Environmental Conservation Partnership Block Grant to NRPC.
- Completed a road erosion inventory on private and park roads in the Lake Carmi watershed and several projects are have be identified for design and construction. Hosted a virtual workshop for residents on Best Management Practices (BMPs) for private roads and driveways. Funded by a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program to NRPC.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

### *Healthy Roots*

HRC promotes the local food economy with programs supporting farm and food businesses, local food access and gleaning. Three staff members oversee the programs with input from an advisory committee of farmers, producers and buyers. This year, Healthy Roots Collaborative worked directly with 55 growers and makers through In Good Taste, virtual events, business development, and market access facilitation. HRC engaged 12 buyers in new buying partnerships and 9 schools were coached in building resilient farm to school programs. Additional highlights from this year include:

- 32,000 lbs of food gleaned and delivered to 25 sites throughout Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.
- 4,235 Farmers to Families Food Boxes distributed.
- 17,800 meals delivered through the Everyone Eats program. Each meal uses 30% local ingredients on average.
- 275% more food was moved throughout FGI, compared to the preceding year.

### *Grants in Aid Program*

NRPC coordinates a statewide program sponsored by the VT Department of Environmental Conservation. The Municipal Grants in Aid Program provides funding for municipalities to bring segments of roadway into compliance with the Municipal Roads General Permit, which sets standards for road improvements to help decrease runoff. For FY21, over 200 municipalities signed up to participate in the program. Construction totals are not yet available because the construction deadline was extended due to construction delays related to COVID-19. In the NRPC region in FY 20, 13 municipalities completed local road construction projects that will decrease runoff and lessen stormwater impacts to our waterways.

### *Northwest Vermont Communications Union District*

NRPC provided administrative and project management assistance to support the development of the Northwest Vermont Communications Union District, a municipal entity created to support the expansion of broadband in the Northwest Region.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

NRPC owns its building at 75 Fairfield Street in St. Albans, purchased in 2013. This provides budget certainty and enables NRPC to hold and manage an asset rather than pay rent. Planned renovation costs over the next three years are included in the budget and budget reserves, and the Board has adopted an accelerated mortgage repayment plan. Annual building expenses are projected to decline within ten years of purchase. NRPC staff continued to work virtually during FY21 due to the COVID-19 state of emergency. The office is regularly vacant or minimally occupied and operating expenses continue to be lower.

The Board utilizes a reserve fund policy for long term financial planning. NRPC maintains Board designated reserve funds to cover operating shortfalls, accrued leave time, building renovations and equipment replacement. The Commission maintains a three-year plan for equipment and software upgrades and replacement.

The FY 21 NRPC budget was \$4.83 million. The Municipal Grants in Aid program accounted for \$3 million of the budget, leaving an operating budget for NRPC of \$1.83 million. Revenue sources included state and federal performance contracts, grants and local assessments. Virtually all the NRPC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines and/or performance measures. This means that the NRPC has limited flexibility in how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through municipal assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important because it gives us the greatest latitude to respond to NRPC-identified needs in the region. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires non-federal matching funds ranging from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Municipal assessments and regional planning funds passed through to NRPC under a performance contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development provide matching funds required by grantors.

NRPC is still determining the budget impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. An audit is currently underway and will be completed in the fall of 2021. NRPC has had no audit findings in over ten years and as such is considered a 'low risk' grantee by federal agencies. Staffing in FY 21 included: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Senior Planners (3), Regional Planner (2), Planning Technician, GIS Technician, Office Administrator, Economic Recovery Coordinator, Healthy Roots Coordinators (3) and interns (3). Six of the employees have been with NRPC for fifteen years or more. Two AmeriCorps VISTA employees also joined NRPC in FY 21.

## **'AT WORK' MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the NRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# NRPC at Work: FY 2021



## Projects

- Brownfield
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning
- Grant Writing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Road Erosion Inventory
- Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

## Designation

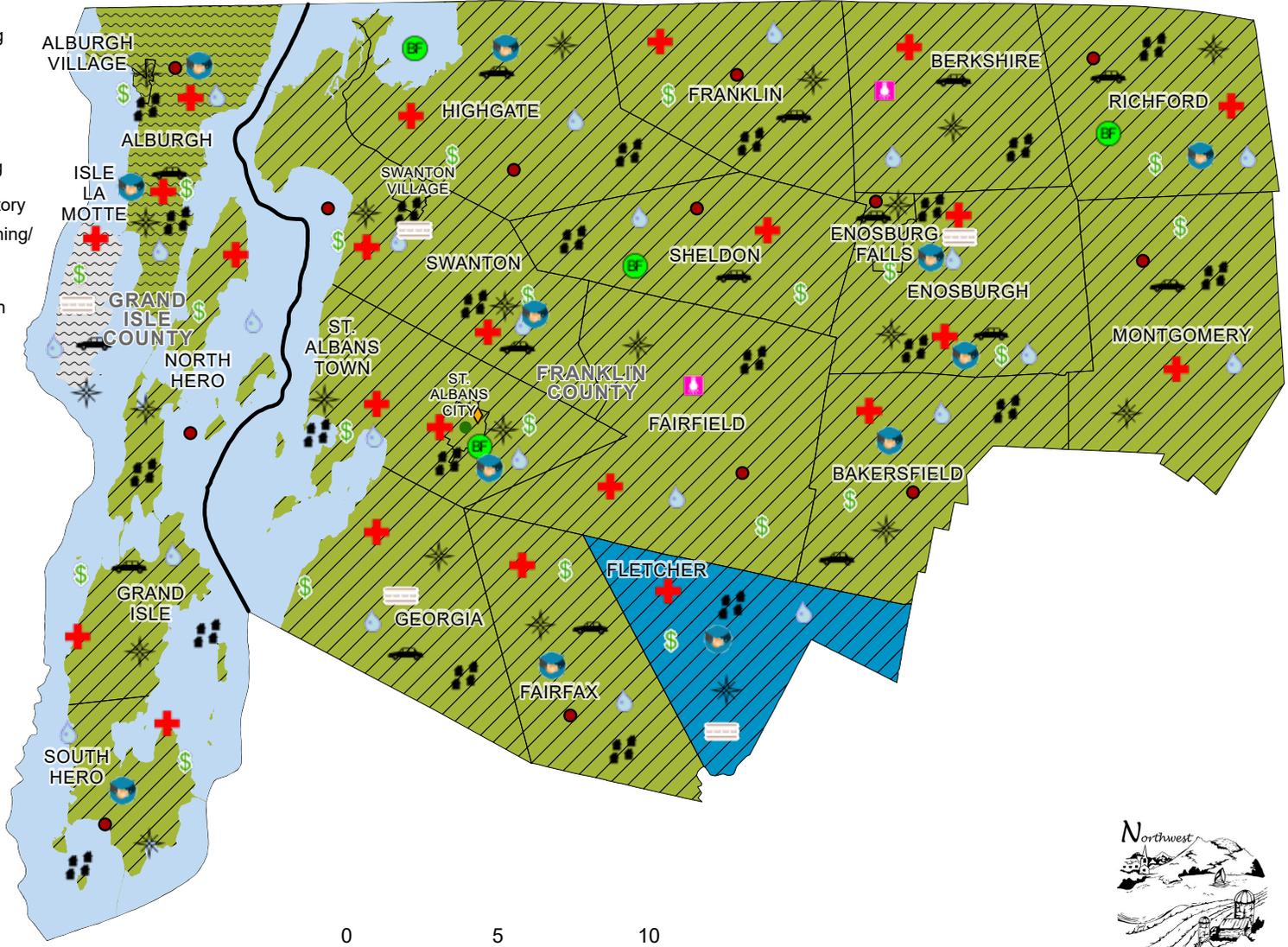
- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Growth Center

## Town Bylaw Status

- Adopted
- Flood Only

## Town Plan Status

- Current
- Expired
- No Town Plan
- County Boundary



# Rutland Regional Planning Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

The Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) represents the 27 municipalities of the Rutland Region in Southwest Vermont. Created in 1967, the RRPC leverages the power of people working together to assist municipalities provide effective local government services and to work cooperatively to address regional issues. The RRPC primary goals are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving and sustainable regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. RRPC staff provide technical services to local, state and federal levels of government and to the Region's non-profits, organizations and businesses, which are driven by GE, OMYA, Casella, Castleton University, Killington/Pico Ski Resorts and the Rutland Regional Medical Center.

### REGIONAL PLANNING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a regional plan. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- The RRPC is a resource for towns, a platform for ideas and inspires a vision for the future. It balances local desires, best practices and regional growth for communities that are vibrant today and strong for years to come.
- Rutland Region towns count on the RRPC to provide the tools and information they need to make smart decisions about land use, economic development, natural resources, energy, transportation, emergency management, and more.
- The RRPC creates opportunities and provide space for people to learn, share and come together around topics that matter and impact our lives.
- The Rutland Regional Plan articulates a vision for the Rutland region: economic, social, and environmental resilience; incremental and long-term growth; urban design; and walkable, connected communities.

### MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has focused on improving town plans, local permitting through education and consultations, bylaw modernization, economic development planning, and grant administration. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other funding sources. Highlights include:

- The RRPC worked with Planning Commissions in the towns of Ira, Castleton, Fair Haven, Sudbury, Mount Holly, Chittenden, Hubbardton, Brandon, Proctor, Mendon, Danby, and Poultney to develop language for municipal plans and land use bylaws.
- Provided municipal project management services to Pawlet, Castleton, Poultney, West Rutland and Fair Haven.
- Provided guidance and technical assistance to Administrative Officers regarding the Planning and Development Act, specifically Chapter 117, for numerous towns.

- Provided Municipal Planning Grant Administration to the towns of Poultney, Ira and Proctor.
- Provided training and consultations to seven municipalities covering state land use goals and consistency with planning statutes.
- Assisted towns utilize and administer Covid-related Local Government Emergency Response (LGER) and ARPA funding.
- Reviewed approximately 40 Act 250 and Section 248 applications for consistency with the Rutland Regional Plan.
- Worked with the Town of Ira and Tinmouth to initiate their Village Center Designation and Fair Haven to transition from a Village Center to designated Downtown.
- Worked with DHCD and CNU to create the *Zoning for Great Neighborhoods* publication.
- Worked with the Rutland Regional Medical Center to update the regional Health Needs Assessment update and began working with the Vermont Department of Health on a new healthy community design project.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid land use planning principals. RPCs work with towns and other organizations to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long-term economic growth.

- Operated the Rutland Region Workforce Investment Board (WIB).
- Provided administrative support for the Otter Creek Communications Union District.
- Worked with municipalities to modernize town plans, bylaws and transportation networks to unlock the long-term growth potential associated with traditional development patterns.
- Continued work on the four-region West-Central Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Worked with the Town of Ira and Tinmouth to initiate their Village Center Designation and Fair Haven to transition from a Village Center to designated Downtown.
- Through the RRPC/WIB partnership, conducted a regional service provider mapping project funded by the Vermont Community Foundation.
- Operated the Rutland Region Brownfields Program, which is currently assessing five new sites in the Rutland Region.
- Economic Development Chapters were updated in the Poultney, Killington, Castleton and Mendon municipal plans.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in all phases of Emergency Management – preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. RPCs partner with state and regional agencies on measures such as trainings, plans, and exercises to help communities prepare in advance of an incident to ensure effective response. During an incident, we provide direct staff support to the State Emergency Operations Center and coordinate the timely collection of local damage information. Prior to the next disaster, RPCs provide municipalities with the technical assistance needed to complete mitigation priorities to make them

more disaster resilient, and assist as needed, in special circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other declared disasters. Highlights include:

- Assisted municipalities with a range of planning efforts – Local Emergency Management Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans, Incident Specific Action Plans.
- Worked with municipalities to maximize their State Emergency Relief Assistance Fund rating, including enrollment in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Coordinated an After Action Review of local responses to COVID-19 – what actions were taken, what worked out well, what was challenging, and how to better prepare for another surge (or future event that disrupts normal operations).
- Coordinated two tabletop exercises. One focused on a winter storm long-term power outage and exercised the operational coordination between town officials and our regional social service agencies to monitor and address the needs of vulnerable populations before, during, and after the storm. The other focused on a region-wide flood event and exercised the collective decision-making, communications, and coordination processes outlined in the Local Emergency Management Plan, Rutland Region Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement, Local Liaison Activation Procedure, and VT211 Residential Damage Reporting Procedure.
- Hosted several meetings and trainings to strengthen local capacity in the areas of: Emergency Operations Center staffing; socioeconomic contracting requirements for FEMA Public Assistance applicants; regional broadband initiatives and social service agency programming; hazard mitigation and COVID-19 grant funding opportunities; stormwater master planning; resilient road rights-of-way; and debris management.
- Participated in meetings of the Rutland Regional Medical Center, Rutland Southern Vermont Regional Airport, and Slate Valley Unified School District safety teams.
- Two of three RRPC staff completed training to serve in the State Emergency Operations Center.
- Collected and communicated local damage information from municipalities after one significant flood event in December 2020, in coordination with Vermont Division of Emergency Management, VTrans and Agency of Natural Resources.

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A continued focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process. Over the last year, significant projects included:

- Continued to work with our 27 towns that required assistance with municipal enhanced energy planning. RRPC provided updated energy data, assistance with prioritizing strategies, and renewable energy siting maps.
- Six Rutland Region towns now have enhanced energy plans with Certificates of Energy Compliance: Tinmouth, Proctor, Brandon, Rutland Town, Sudbury, and Benson. RRPC worked

with Mendon and Pawlet to get enhanced energy plans ready for adoption and with two other municipalities to continue drafting enhanced energy plans.

- Reached out to the 12 Rutland Region communities with local energy groups to ensure they have the resources needed to implement renewable energy development and energy conservation goals. Also assisted municipal and local energy committee efforts and used RRPC social media to promote specific thermal and electrical energy efficiency initiatives from Efficiency Vermont and Green Mountain Power.
- The Regional Committee reviewed approximately 30 Section 248 applications in 15 towns for solar electric generation infrastructure and telecommunications facilities.
- Along with several other regional planning commissions, RRPC assisted the Department of Public Service with its review of its original Act 174 enhanced energy planning standards for regions and municipalities.
- With new funding from ACCD, RRPC started planning for the hire of a new part-time energy planner to address climate change and Vermont's clean energy goals by helping our municipalities implement projects from their adopted energy plans.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans and tactical basin plans and related projects:

- As the designated Clean Water Service Provider (CWSP) for the South Lake Champlain Watershed, RRPC and the Poultney Mettewee Natural Resources Conservation District (PMNRCD) assisted in drafting the Rule for this new statute particularly for the re-organizing of internal operations that will be needed. RRPC will oversee the CWSP, provide accounting services and manage the stakeholders' council; PMNRCD will provide technical oversight relative to all aspects of project delivery.
- Began work with Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) which was designated the CWSP for the Otter Creek Watershed. RRPC will assist ACRPC in administering and overseeing water quality projects and by serving on its Basin Water Quality Council.
- Initiated a petition for reclassifying Ward Marsh in West Haven to a Class 1 Wetland. Worked with a VDEC wetlands specialist, other state agencies, the town, and affected landowners on drafting the petition.
- Worked with VDEC Watershed Coordinator Angie Allen to track progress on implemented strategies in the Tactical Basin Plans for the Otter Creek and South Lake Champlain basins.
- Continued to train municipalities on the provisions of the Clean Water Initiative, including related mandatory permits and funding opportunities.
- As part of the Clean Water Initiative, RRPC staff worked with Castleton on increased protection designations for area waterways. New river corridor regulations were included in the town's newly adopted Bylaws.
- Worked with Shrewsbury to include River Corridor protections and the latest state river corridor mapping data into its existing floodplain regulations.
- Assisted 22 towns in the region in year three of the VTDEC Grants-in-Aid Program. Seven of the towns also received Grants in Aid funding to help purchase road maintenance equipment.

- Updated a comprehensive Municipal Protectiveness list of policies and regulations to highlight the accomplishments and opportunities for additional water quality efforts for the Otter Creek Watershed.
- Under an EPA/VT DEC 604b grant, staff helped update the State’s Watershed Projects Database of Clean Water Act projects in the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan.
- Partnered with the Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District (PMNRCD) to promote flood and climate resiliency in the Flower Brook watershed which includes Pawlet, Danby and Tinmouth. This is funded by the High Meadows Fund.
- Assisted Pittsford in getting awarded a Design Implementation Block Grant to construct a stormwater runoff project designed in an earlier Block Grant. Worked with Rutland Town on another Block Grant for a 100% design to expand a stormwater runoff pond in an impaired watershed.
- Wrapped up an Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) grant for Chittenden’s Wildcat Road. Partnered with the U.S. Forest Service on this feasibility study to restore a wetland bisected by a town road.
- Worked with Watershed Consulting and Brandon on designing a Private Public Partnership pilot project to address the new 3-Acre Permit.
- RRPC staff assisted PMNRCD in securing Lake Champlain Basin Program funding for a needed water quality and flood hazard mitigation culvert project in Danby.

## **BROWNFIELDS**

Vermont RPCs have sought and been awarded over 15 million dollars from EPA for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments (ESA) allow properties to be sold, developed, or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, and increase housing opportunities.

The Rutland Region Brownfields Program (BRP) has existed for 18 years and received approximately \$3 million in funding from the US EPA to conduct community-wide assessment activities and redevelopment planning. Funding for this work has been reinvested in the Region and leveraged other funding sources, making the program an essential land use and economic development tool for municipalities. Highlights include:

- Coordinated ESA work in four towns, including municipally owned sites such as the Proctor Town Office and Castleton Free Library.
- Phase II ESA work was conducted on the former College of St. Joseph campus in anticipation for a mixed-use complex including assisted residential, a regional health center and City of Rutland recreation facility.
- Continued work on a remediation and redevelopment plan for the former Berwick Hotel site in downtown Rutland. The site, known locally as “the Pit”, has served as a parking lot in the heart of the city since 1973, when the original building burned. ESA work and redevelopment planning has this site on the verge of redevelopment into a multi-story, mixed-use development, which will expand economic development opportunities and add to the vibrancy of historic Downtown Rutland.

- Phase I and Phase II assessment work at the former Lynda Lee Fashions manufacturing facility in Rutland City, is setting the stage for a redevelopment of this historic building. Potential future residential, commercial and civic uses included in the development and partnership with the Vermont Farmers Food Center will further the revitalization of the City's Northwest Neighborhood.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through a contract with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

The RRPC remains focused on working with its municipalities to establish effective multimodal networks, which will serve as a pillar for the development of strong villages and downtown centers, increasing the economic viability of the region at large.

### **Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

- Worked with 20 municipalities in the Rutland Region actively engaged in regional and municipal transportation planning.
- Held 10 Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings.
- Worked with 2 non-municipal representatives actively engaged in the TAC.
- Coordinated 6 activities with municipalities and VTrans.

### **Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

- Continued membership on Marble Valley Regional Transit District Board of Commissioners.
- Held six (6) meetings of regional E&D Public Transit Advisory Committee.
- Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) worked with VTrans to submit asset driven and regionally driven projects for Vermont Project Selection and Project Prioritization (VPSP2)
- Established two new regional committees- the Rutland Walk/Bike Council and the Rutland Airport Committee.
- Participated in VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Program Selection Committee.
- Worked with VTrans and Town of Poultney on Better Connections – Town to Trails Project.

### **Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

- Created Road Foreman Quarterly Newsletter to supplement cancelled Road Foreman Meetings due to COVID-19.
- 30% of the transportation budget was spent on municipal technical assistance.
- Completed 10 road erosion and culvert inventories, 7 traffic counts, two Park & Ride Counts, and quarterly bicycle and pedestrian counts on four locations across the Rutland Region.

- Conducted comprehensive traffic and pedestrian counts for Center Street Pilot Project.
- Assisted municipalities with applications and technical support for the Better Roads Program, Better Connections Program, Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation Grant Program, Transportation Alternatives, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Program.
- Provided assistance to Fair Haven with planning and preparation for large-scale Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant to fund Downtown Pedestrian Improvements Project.
- Assisting 2 towns with updates to Transportation Chapters of municipal plans.
- Assisted 4 towns with feasibility/scoping studies for transportation related projects.
- Assisted Poultney with planning for Bridge Closure/Re-opening on VT-31.
- Provided MRGP assistance for all 27 Towns, cleaned-up incomplete segment data, provided planning assistance for compliance schedule.

**Objective #4: Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans**

- Conducted 35 data collection activities for VTrans.

**Objective #5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education**

- Continued work with the Center Street Pilot Project and coordinated design and planning for FY21. Presented at TPI monthly meeting and featured as part of VTrans/ACCD placemaking, pedestrian safety, and bicycle and pedestrian webinars. Worked with City of Rutland and Dubois & King for a final design scoping study, including local concerns meetings and significant public input through surveys.
- Worked with VTrans to coordinate public meetings and planning events for the Rutland Airport Master Plan update. Attended public meetings and coordinated with consultant CHA to hold a Transportation Advisory Committee meeting.
- Working with City of Rutland on the Rutland Amtrak Station Revitalization plan. Held planning meetings, attended Amtrak restart meeting, and coordinated with VTrans. Continuing work with adjacent landowners on a final redesign plan for the area and planning for future grant applications.
- Worked with Rutland High School administration, faculty, and students on transportation demonstrations to improve circulation and safety on campus. The student-led project included planning meetings, traffic committee meetings, and a demonstration workday. The demonstration was covered by local news and will be made permanent by next school year.

**GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- **Town and Regional Planning** – Worked with the towns of Poultney, Castleton, Fair Haven and Pittsford to create and/or update municipal plan and zoning maps and to provide technical GIS support. Worked on Village Center Designation mapping for Tinmouth and Wallingford. Continued work on the Future Land Use Map for the Rutland Regional Plan and assisted local landowners with the Current Use program, GIS software, online data and map resources, trail mapping, forest mapping, flood hazard mapping, slope mapping and grant related maps. Also

worked with several towns to map: sidewalk, bridge and culvert, highway, future land use, zoning and various other planning maps.

- **Bridge and Culvert Inventories** – RRPC GIS staff worked with six town road departments to collect culvert data using the commission’s ArcGIS Online Collector app and then completed the inventory, mapping, and updates to [www.VTCulverts.com](http://www.VTCulverts.com) for: Mendon, Mount Tabor, Killington, Mount Tabor, Rutland City and Poultney. Began prep. work for next season: Danby, Wallingford, and Shrewsbury. Developed a detailed regional assessment plan for culvert inventories, based on a five year cycle.
- **Transportation Mapping** – Provided mapping support for several transportation related town projects and grant applications. Worked on gravel road, bus route, general highway and AADT regional maps. Added and updated bridge and culvert inventories, as well as performing road erosion inventory assessments and traffic counts for many towns in the region.
- **Emergency Management** – In support of ongoing emergency management planning, RRPC GIS staff created potential Local Hazard Vulnerability maps for several towns in support of their Local Hazard Management Plan. RRPC also participated in several training sessions either remotely or at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).
- **Resiliency Support** – Worked with VTrans and local consultants on the Transportation Resiliency Planning Tool (TRPT) Phase 3 data review project. Provided several towns with maps of their special flood hazard areas and river corridors and maps for site specific flood hazards.
- **Energy Plans** – Continued to work on energy maps for several towns in the region. Provided detailed maps and acreage assessments of potential renewable energy sites.
- **Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP)** – continued to work with several towns reassessing road work performed on high priority segments and collecting data for incomplete road segments and outfalls.

## ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

Administration of the RRPC’s programs, policies, and finances continue to be managed effectively and efficiently. Highlights include:

- Continued to expand RRPC program areas to include broadband planning and deployment, DEI planning, health and wellness planning, and workforce development planning.
- Successful completion of FY 2021 Financial and Final Reports, as well as semi-annual reports for the Agency of Commerce and Community Development; that included the status of performance measures, budget expenses, and other information.
- Leveraged ACCD funds to provide match for grants from VTrans, VEM and EPA, which enabled RRPC to cover indirect costs incurred to expand work into diverse areas of planning.
- Completed FY20 Audit which resulted in “No findings”, which was distributed to requesting granting agencies.
- Provided training for local officials across all program areas in collaboration with local and state organizations.
- Continued supporting RRPC Staff and Board of Commissioners educational activities, such as participation in local, state and federal workshops, trainings and conferences.
- Updated the RRPC Employee Handbook, Bylaws and Policies.
- Continued to offer meeting space in the RRPC offices for regional partners.

- Maintain marketing and communications materials including the RRPC website, social media feeds, program guide and rack card.
- Served as the lead RPC administering the ARPA and WQ 604b agreements for the other ten RPCs.

### **'AT WORK' MAP**

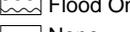
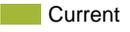
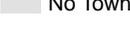
The map depicting the range of services provided by the RRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

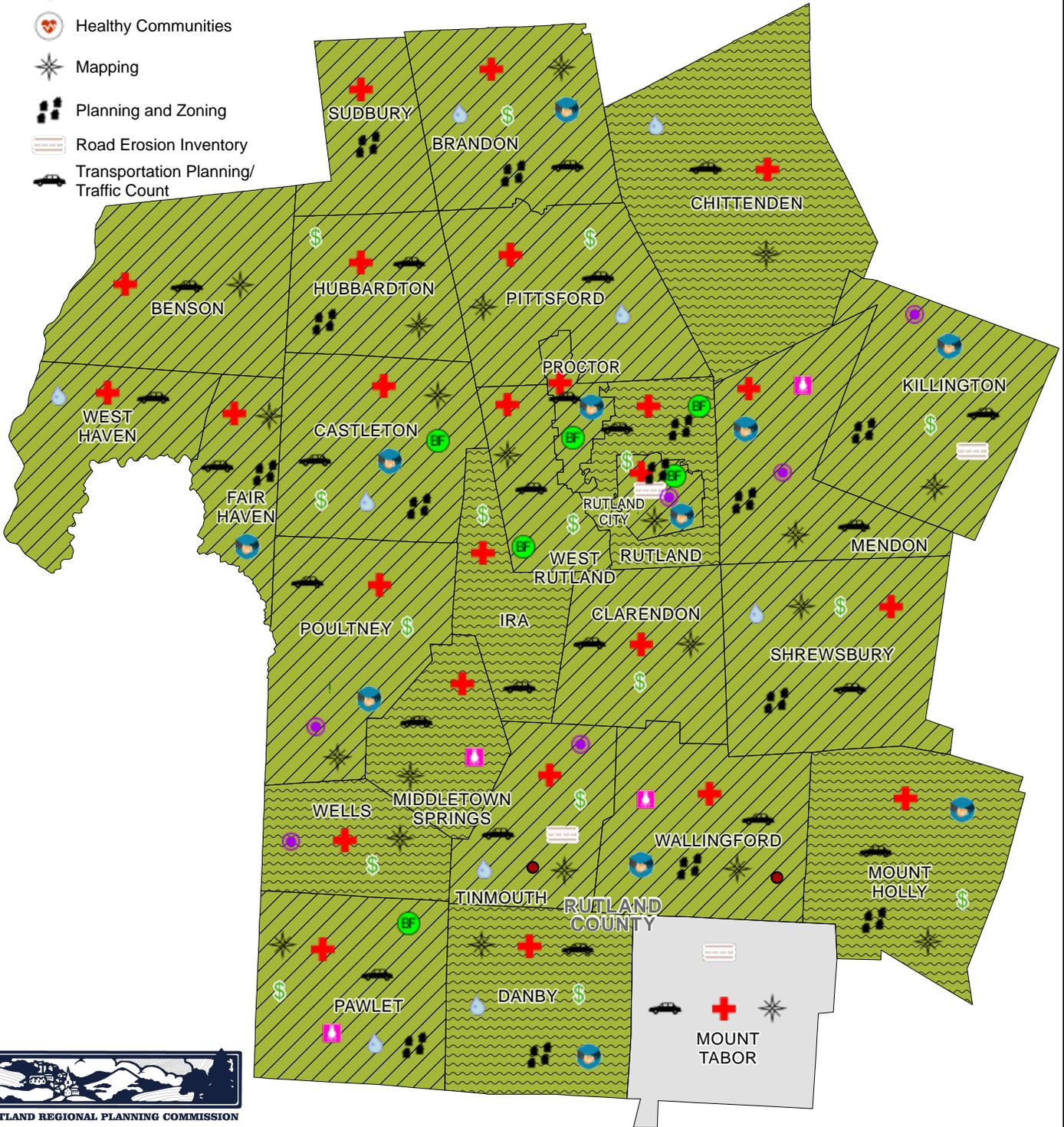
# RRPC at Work: FY 2021

## Projects

-  Bridge and Culvert Inventory
-  Brownfield
-  Clean Water
-  Economic Development
-  Energy Planning & Implementation
-  Emergency Planning
-  Grant Writing
-  Healthy Communities
-  Mapping
-  Planning and Zoning
-  Road Erosion Inventory
-  Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

## Designation

-  Designated Downtown
  -  Designated Village
- ### Town Bylaw Status
-  Adopted
  -  Flood Only
  -  None
- ### Town Plan Status
-  Current
  -  No Town Plan



# Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) provides technical assistance to a 30-town area in east central Vermont. Our primary goals are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving and sustainable regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. TRORC staff provide technical services to local, state and federal levels of government and to the Region's non-profits and businesses.

### **MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION**

TRORC has a staff with more than 80 years of combined experience providing technical assistance to towns. We regularly field ad hoc questions from zoning administrators and town staff, as well as work under contract on larger projects. We act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of our municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards and implementing requirements for economic development, flood resiliency, energy and forest resources planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the TRORC at Work map; highlights include:

- TRORC provided technical assistance to 9 towns related to plan language and bylaws changes.
  - Braintree, Sharon, Strafford, Hartland, Bradford, Brookfield, Thetford, Tunbridge, Pittsfield.
- TRORC hosted two statewide training events in FY21. Both events were held via Zoom meeting with various town officials attending.
  - Zoning & Subdivision Bylaw Training with 21 participants
  - Energy and Land Use Training with 8 participants

### **REGIONAL PLANNING**

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- Regional Plan Updates: TRORC's Regional Plan was adopted near the beginning of the fiscal year. This Plan has a strong section on Forest Blocks, and created a new future land use area to address these lands. The energy section was updated and fully incorporated. Several small changes were made to more dense future land use areas to better reflect local and regional desires, and more definitions were added.
- Regional Plan Implementation: TRORC used the Regional Plan to evaluate applications and participate in the Act 250 and Section 248 projects. In FY 21, 49 applications were received.
- Keys to the Valley: TRORC has been involved the last 2 years with two neighboring regional planning commissions (one of which is in NH) on a comprehensive study of housing needs and solutions. This initiative is titled Keys to the Valley, and finished its main phase this spring with

a major update to the [keystothevalley.com](http://keystothevalley.com) website. This site is essentially the project's report/toolbox/educational tool all rolled into one. One of the many things in this report is a piece on updating land use regulations, some of which refers to the Zoning for Great Neighborhoods work done by CNU for ACCD. Several trainings were held this spring on what is in the site and how different sectors (business, towns, local groups, etc.) can use parts of the Keys site. This phase is over but the project continues with meeting with many local housing groups and drafting legislative proposals and additional study needs.

## **BROWNFIELDS**

- Environmental site assessments remove concerns about contamination and allow properties to be sold and redeveloped in ways that benefit the local and state economy, create or protect jobs, provide greenspace, and increase housing opportunities.
- TRORC was awarded \$300,000 in EPA assessment funds in FY 20 and has reviewed all known sites in the region in consultation with VTDEC and regional partners. Selected accomplishments for FY 21:
  - Conducted Phase I assessment at sites in Randolph and Hartford.
  - Prepared and finalized Corrective Action Plans for sites in Hartford and Randolph.
  - Conducted Phase II assessment for sites in Newbury, Tunbridge, & Randolph.
  - Closed out monitoring wells at sites in Tunbridge and Randolph.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with local and regional development groups to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- TRORC continues to support the Cornerstone Creative Community of Vermont (3CVT) as the Zone Agent to help implement projects related to the creative economy. Through this effort, TRORC also serves on the statewide Vermont Creative Network as the RPC representative. TRORC continues to host 3CVT steering committee meetings and created a community discussion email list for creatives. To further support the creative sector during the pandemic, TRORC secured funding from the EDA in the amount of \$276,000 to implement a Covid recovery project in FY22 and FY23.
- TRORC continues to work with East Central Vermont Economic Development District in supporting the implementation of the goals, strategies and actions of our federally approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

**Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities**

***Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) activity*** - Total of 6 meetings held, average member participation rate 40% (expressed as a % of total TAC membership)

***TAC Outcomes***

- TRORC participated in numerous policy stakeholder meetings as requested by VTrans and other agencies:
  - VTrans VPSP2 launch (project prioritization revamping methodology) – 10 meetings.
  - Staff continued RPC road erosion methodology discussion for road erosion inventory collection for summer 2020 and post MRGP data clean up for towns.
- **Other Outreach** - 4 Public Transit Elderly and Disabled meetings held, 3 Vermont Local Road Stakeholder meetings, 3 community project questionnaires, 1 road safety audit.
- **Data collection RPCs do for VTrans** – 60 p&r (20 sites x 3x a year), 8 town Complete Streets form, 28 traffic counts, 10 bike ped counts, 30 town MIRE completed

### **Objective #2: Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning**

- **Participation in Project Development Activities** - Three project scoping efforts
- **Participation in Act 250 review related to transportation issues** - none in 2020-2021

### **Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

- **Seventy-five percent (70%) of TPI budget (Task # 4 Short Range Transportation Planning) supports municipal planning.**
- **Other Better Roads (BR) - related work** – assisted 11 towns with 20 BR grant applications for 2020-2021, completed 5 town 2019-2020 BR road erosion and culvert inventories, 10 towns for MRGP data conversion for deadline. All 30 towns will have a completed REI by DEC’s MRGP deadline of Dec. 31, 2020 – a significant undertaking by staff.
- **Participation in public transit efforts** – TRORC staff continued to participate in Tri-Valley Transit changed service routes reflected by mapping technical assistance and participated in TVT’s Bradford Bus Barn planning efforts.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness and recovery phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State’s four Public Safety Districts. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, help communities access grant funds, arrange training, and assisted as needed in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other declared disasters. TRORC’s staff played a strong role in regional emergency response.

- TRORC staff are often tasked by VEM to poll towns for disaster damage in the wake of incidents. TRORC also has a very good working relationship with our VTrans Districts and coordinates with them in times when road damages are expected. We do outreach with our road foremen on disaster recovery and we staff our regional LEPC #12.
- All our municipalities have updated local emergency management plans, and TRORC staff went out to assist towns in filling out the plan format.
- Writing Hazard Mitigation Plans for our towns.

- Overall in TRORC Region: 24 Towns with Final Approval by FEMA for Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- TRORC staff are working with five communities on updating their Plan.
- TRORC staff was appointed to the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) to represent regional planning commissions.
- TRORC staff worked with and led the SERC and LEPCs to consolidate into a one statewide LEPC model for Vermont.
- TRORC continued its lead role in providing HUD and VHCB funds from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development for buying out flood damaged properties.
- TRORC staff were trained to be staff in the State Emergency Operations Center.
- TRORC staff assisted communities with COVID-19 response and planning.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Produced custom maps for town requests (EAB ash, road name, infrastructure atlases etc.).
- Managed ArcGIS Online portal with several web maps (energy, regional plan, flooding)
- Updated town plan maps and zoning maps.
- Supported town asset inventories (culvert, road erosion).
- Supported parcel mapping project with town outreach
- Uploaded updated town zoning layers to VCGI portal
- Completed regional plan maps.
- Completed Hazard Mitigation Plan analysis and maps.
- Act 174 renewable energy generation maps

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- TRORC has continued to update and maintain town energy data reports and energy resource maps that align with the data needed for Act 174 compliant plans.
- TRORC reviewed or commented on 8 petitions for a Certificate of Public Good within the region, the bulk of which were for solar projects.
- TRORC provided technical assistance to the following municipalities to draft enhanced energy plans: Bethel, Braintree, Sharon, and Strafford.
- TRORC contracted with BCRC to work on energy planning and training under Efficiency Vermont.
- TRORC hired an Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator (IREC) to work with Bradford, Fairlee, Thetford, Norwich, Strafford, Sharon, Barnard, and Woodstock on implementing their energy plans. The IREC collected baseline energy and greenhouse gas emissions data, set up

energy audits in municipal buildings, developed energy-related zoning regulations and policies, and is developing one municipal and two community solar projects.

- TRORC continues to work with partners on regional energy planning implementation through participation with Efficiency Vermont, Vital Communities Energy Advisory Committee, and Green Mountain Power programming.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- TRORC continues to play an active role in commenting on water quality initiatives by the state, as well as promoting high quality waters through basin planning processes. We have remained active in both the Basin 9 and 14 planning processes and have supported the implementation of water quality initiatives identified through the most recent Basin 10 planning process. We have also remained active in Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) designations as well as reclassification of waters to A1 or B1.
- TRORC continues to coordinate our Clean Water Advisory Council (CWAC) which plays an active role in advising TRORC activities. The CWAC provides local and regional input regarding storm water, groundwater, wetlands, stream stability, project priorities, and other water quality issues.
- TRORC serves on the Connecticut River Joint Commission Board and participates with the CT River Conservancy on the FERC Dam relicensing process along the CT River
- Developed Flood Resilience Elements for Town Plans that identify streams, rivers, infrastructure and properties in town that vulnerable to flooding and/or fluvial erosion and designates these areas for future protection. TRORC also held a Flood Bylaw Administration Training to support Zoning Administrators in their work regarding flood regulations.
- TRORC coordinated ARPA stormwater and other potential flood resilience projects.
- TRORC supported FEMA remapping in the White River and Ottauquechee River Watersheds.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

- TRORC continues in its role as the statewide coordinator of CDBG-DR funding for the buyout of flood damaged structures, having completed over 150 buyouts statewide. TRORC has also managed 12 buyouts that have been redesigned as river access points or parks.
- TRORC has continued to partner with the Mt. Ascutney Prevention Partnership (MAPP) in working with communities on policies that focus on healthy communities. In FY 21, TRORC continued to add to an online database of resources and example policies to support healthy communities. TRORC also continues to share our health chapter template with planning commissions, select boards, and other Upper Valley health groups.
- TRORC assisted with the rollout and administration of a statewide emergency grant program to assist sole proprietors negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY 21, TRORC

helped 97 small businesses access grant funding. TRORC's service area covered Windsor, Orange, Caledonia, Essex, Orleans, Franklin, Chittenden, and Grand Isle Counties.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

TRORC is funded by performance and project contracts with federal, state and local levels of government, foundation support, and contributions from member municipalities and non-profits. TRORC's FY 21 budget was approximately \$1.5 million. Property Transfer Tax funding passed through by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development of \$280,000 leveraged about \$825,000 in additional federal sources that addressed the needs of citizens and communities in the TRORC region. TRORC's non-profit arm complements and furthers the work of TRORC and access national foundation funding on emerging topics.

TRORC had a Single Audit conducted by an independent Certified Public Accounting firm and has numerous field audits and reviews by funders. No significant findings, material weaknesses, nor questioned costs were identified. Staff continuously avail themselves of professional development opportunities on program and administrative areas.

TRORC serves 30 municipalities and operates with a Board of Directors that develop and implement policy and oversee a staff of 11. The Board systematically updates all accounting practices and safeguards and organizational policies on an ongoing basis.

## **'AT WORK' MAP**

The map depicting the range of services provided by the TRORC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# TRORC at Work: FY 2021

4

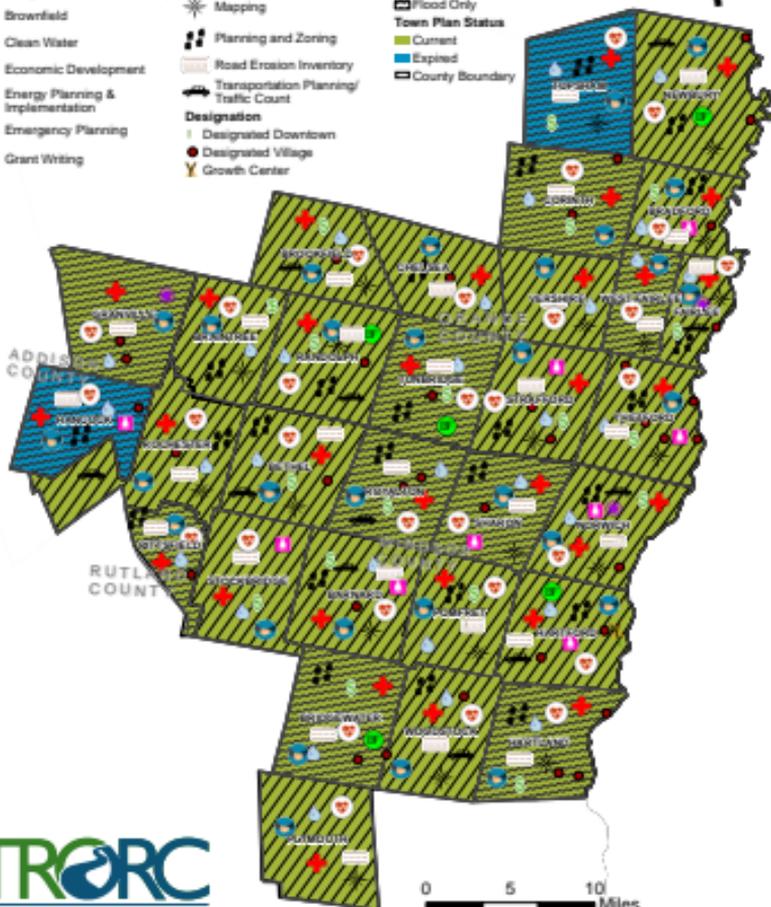
## Projects

- Bridge and Culvert Inventory
- Brownfield
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Energy Planning & Implementation
- Emergency Planning
- Grant Writing

- Healthy Communities
  - Mapping
  - Planning and Zoning
  - Road Erosion Inventory
  - Transportation Planning/Traffic Count
- Designation**
- Designated Downtown
  - Designated Village
  - Growth Center

## Zoning Bylaw Status

- Adopted
  - Flood Only
- Town Plan Status**
- Current
  - Expired
- County Boundary



# Windham Regional Commission

## FY 2021 Annual Report

Celebrating our 56<sup>th</sup> year, the Windham Regional Commission (WRC) is an important resource to 27 towns in southeast Vermont, including all of the towns of Windham County, the towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, and Winhall in Bennington County, and Weston in Windsor County. In the absence of county government we are an essential link between local, state, and federal government. Our mission is to assist towns in Southeastern Vermont to provide effective local governance and work collaboratively with them to address regional issues.

Each town's Selectboard determines who will represent the town on the WRC. Each member town can appoint two [commissioners](#) who represent that town's interest in regional affairs. The exception is Somerset, where a town supervisor is appointed by the Governor. Additionally, the WRC has up to ten citizen interest [commissioners](#) who represent other regional interests such as business and industry, healthy communities, agriculture, natural resources, energy, and housing. The WRC is organized around a strong committee structure. These [committees](#) are where most of the work gets done and the decisions made. Commissioners serve on these committees and make the decisions. The WRC has 10 highly-qualified [staff](#) who provide support to the committees, and execute the Commission's [program of work](#).

### MUNICIPAL PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning and plan implementation staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education, municipal consultation, bylaw modernization, and implementing new requirements for flood resiliency, forest blocks and habitat connectivity, energy, and water quality planning. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential to smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions, and other grants. The technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; some highlights were:

- Provided assistance to towns in updating and adopting town plans (11 towns) and land use regulations (14 towns). This included work on town plans, zoning bylaws, flood hazard area regulations, and subdivision regulations. Updating town plans included assisting towns with addressing Act 174 enhanced energy planning standards and associated requirements and the recent Act 171 planning standards for protection of forest blocks and habitat connectors. Updating bylaws included assisting towns with updating flood hazard area regulations, including protection of river corridors, and administration and enforcement of such regulations.
- Provided general technical assistance to 13 towns on topics including Chapter 117 statutory processes and requirements, Corona pandemic-related changes to them (Act 92), Interim Bylaws, and general administration and enforcement of land use regulations.
- Worked with four towns on five new Village Center designation applications.
- Presented a virtual regional training on Basics of Land Use Planning and Regulation. There were 32 registrants representing 15 towns and villages. Provided customized Basics of Land Use Planning and Regulation trainings for Planning Commissions and others, e.g., Selectboard and Zoning Board of Adjustment or Development Review Board members, in multiple towns.
- Presented a regional virtual training session on Conservation Subdivisions. There were more than 20 registrants representing boards and commissions in six towns.

- Conducted five municipal consultations with town Planning Commissions and others, to discuss town planning, regional planning commission review and approval of town plans and confirmation of towns’ planning processes, and regional commission programs.
- Assisted five towns in developing and submitting Municipal Planning Grant and other grant applications for town planning, zoning, community development, and flood resilience projects.
- Worked with Whitingham to implement flood resilience projects, including assistance applying for and administering grants to fund scoping, project management, and a FEMA buyout.

## REGIONAL PLANNING

RPCs coordinate planning at the regional level through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive regional plan, and related plans and studies such as the regional energy plan and regional transportation plan. These plans guide local planning and the investment decisions of the public and private sectors.

- The WRC readopted its regional plan in order to allow more space and time for a substantial update. The plan would have expired in September, 2022. It is the Commissions intent to focus the regional plan update on means by which to achieve compact settlement, resilience and adaptation strategies to protect settlements from flooding and other climate change impacts, and the preservation and improvement of habitat connectivity within the region.
- Project Review - During this reporting period the WRC reviewed 12 Act 250 applications and 8 Section 248 applications. The latter were mainly solar projects. Act 250 applications included those related to Mount Snow Resort, GMP line relocations, the Guilford Sportsmen property, Blue Flame Gas facility in a neighboring town, an ice cream shop in Vernon, and following several larger projects that remain incomplete.
- WRC is following the decommissioning and site restoration of the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station and actively participating as a member of the Vermont Nuclear Decommissioning Citizen Advisory Panel.
- The WRC is active in the deliberations over the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of dams on the Connecticut River in Vermont and Massachusetts.

## BROWNFIELDS

- The WRC [brownfields program](#), since its inception in 2000, has brought a total of \$5.2 million dollars in federal brownfields funds to the region for assessment and cleanup of brownfields sites.
- Attended virtual statewide brownfield roundtable meetings with other planners, Vermont Agencies and the U.S. EPA.
- During this past year WRC Brownfields program has worked on the following sites:

Site	Town/Village	Brownfields Work	Reuse plan
22 Gates Pond Rd.	Village of Whitingham	Phase II completed this year.	Reuse plan for mixed use – commercial and residential.
47 Flat St.	Brattleboro	Phase I and Phase II completed this year. ABCA/CAP underway.	Reuse plan for mixed use – commercial and affordable housing.

5354 Coolidge Hwy./Winchester	Guilford	Phase II postponed due to COVID.	Plan is to continue use as site for mobile homes.
Archery Building, 26 Depot St.	Brattleboro	ECCA and CAP update underway. Asbestos Report Completed this year.	Plan is to demolish the structure and reuse the site for parking associated with the adjacent new train station.
BMAC/11 Arch St.	Brattleboro	CAP update and Section 106 Review underway. Historic and Archeological Assessments completed this year.	Plan is to demolish structure and reuse site for new uses related to expanded BMAC.
CF Church/80 Flat St.	Brattleboro	Phase II completed this year.	Plan is for continued commercial use.
Friends of the West River	Londonderry	ABCA/CAP completed this year.	This site will be conserved and provide public trail access.
The Garage	Bellows Falls	Supplemental Assessment work underway. Approved Cleanup Grant and preparing to close.	Building will be demolished except façade. New construction of affordable housing.
Green River Floodplain	Guilford	CAP Completion Report completed this year.	The site will be conserved through a conservation easement held by Vermont River Conservancy. The easement will restrict future development and provide public access.
NEYT Arts Campus - 48/64 Elm St.	Brattleboro	Closed on Cleanup Grant this year. Preparing for cleanup and demolition.	Redevelopment by New England Youth Theatre for additional outdoor space.
Red Clover Commons 2	Brattleboro	Closed on Cleanup Loan for this year. Cleanup work complete.	Site was previously cleaned up and redeveloped for affordable housing. Current cleanup effort will make way for additional affordable housing.

Robertson Paper Mill	Village of Bellows Falls	CAP Construction Completion Report completed this year.	Town has been marketing site.
Saxtons River Park	Village of Saxtons River	CAP Construction Completion Report completed this year.	Redevelopment of former mill and gas station parcels into a community park.
Thermal House	Brattleboro	CAP Construction Completion Report underway.	Redevelopment for maple syrup warehouse and distribution facility.
Wyman-Flint/Penta	Bellows Falls	Phase I complete.	Would like to redevelop as part of CT River Heritage Center.

## ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning. RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) to this end in a number of ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help position Vermont for long-term economic gain.

- Hosted a “Looking Forward” webinar series, which included the topics of community development strategies, historic preservation funding, urine-diverting toilets and wastewater management, and conservation subdivisions.
- Participated on Southeastern Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) Board.
- Participation in the USDA-funded Rural Community Development Initiative being led by the BDCC to develop regional capacity to support economic development across Windham and Bennington counties. The goal of the effort is to improve coordination by and between public and private sector partners concerning economic development initiatives such as workforce training, retention, recruitment, and sustainable business investment.
- Continued work with Londonderry to support its Project Londonderry initiative.
- Assisted the Town of Vernon with the development of a grant to the U.S. Economic Development Administration to support the development of plans to develop a new village and the connection thereof to the redevelopment of the Vermont Yankee site.
- Working with Winston Prouty Center, located on the former Austine School for the Deaf, and the adjoining Delta Campus in Brattleboro in a community planning effort to explore the development of a new neighborhood that could host 100-500 new homes.
- Actively participated in the development of Welcoming Communities Initiative to support refugee resettlement led by BDCC.
- Provided support to towns as they deliberate on the needs and potential benefits of community water and wastewater systems.
- Have been active at the state level in advocacy for state support for community water and wastewater systems in order to retain existing homes and businesses in villages and to make compact settlement possible per state, regional, and municipal policy.
- Continue to assist Windham Region communities with village center and downtown designation applications.

- Worked to establish a Sister City/Region relationship for the Windham Region with a community in Sweden.

## **TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Through contract with the VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont’s transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state’s transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state, and federal transportation network advancement.

The following five categories are performance measures reported to VTrans as part of their report to the legislature.

### **Objective #1: Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions, and Municipalities**

- Held 7 TAC meetings. Engaged 5 non-municipal TAC members actively in transportation planning. The number of TAC meetings was reduced due to response to the COVID-19 pandemic and initial public meeting challenges using remote meeting platforms.
- Actively engaged 26 municipalities in transportation planning.
- Coordinated 12 RPC activities with municipalities and VTrans.

### **Objective # 2: Better Connect Federal, Regional, and Statewide Transportation Planning**

- Regional transportation plan is current (within 8 years).
- Coordinated 2 activities in support of regional public transit providers.
- Staff participated on 5 VTrans committees.
- Participated in Project Prioritization.

### **Objective # 3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities**

- Assisted 8 municipalities with transportation-related grants.
- Spent 52% of budget on municipal technical assistance.
- Conducted 5 municipal transportation inventories.
- Supported 3 transportation-related studies.
- Assisted 1 municipalities with transportation element of municipal/town plan.
- Conducted 5 road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and other funding sources.
- Serving as Municipal Project Manager (not using TPI funds) for Weston Bike/Pedestrian safety scoping study, and salt sheds in Brookline, Newfane, and Wardsboro.

### **Objective # 4: Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans**

- Performed 178 data collection activities specifically for VTrans.

### **Objective # 5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education**

- Coordinated with VTrans on outreach for the Route 9 Corridor Plan including participation in public meetings regarding current conditions and local priorities for Route 9.
- Participated in public meetings in conjunction with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission in New Hampshire for the development of a vision for future use of the existing Charles Dana and Anna Hunt Marsh bridges and the Hinsdale Island.
- Together with Mt. Ascutney Regional Commission and SeVT facilitated the transition of the regional Elders and Persons with Disabilities Committee to open public meeting format.
- Coordinated with VTrans and SeVT on outreach for the Rt. 30 corridor Transit Feasibility Study.
- Coordinated regional outreach for the VTrans Project Selection & Prioritization Pilot to allow municipalities to submit local infrastructure projects for consideration from VTrans.
- Coordinated outreach with VTrans for the Londonderry Neighborhood Connections Micro Transit Pilot program.
- Organized public meetings about emerald ash borer and the impact on local roads (and other public properties).

### Highlights

- Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge Infrastructure Planning - Currently undertaking the Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge project that calls for replacing the existing Route 119 bridges crossing the Connecticut River between Downtown Brattleboro, Vermont and Hinsdale, New Hampshire. Planning for the Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge project began in the early 1990's. The new bridge is to be a steel I-beam girder bridge with aesthetic enhancements and a sidewalk on the upstream side. The existing Route 119 bridges will remain open at all times during project construction. After construction, the existing Route 119 bridges are planned for rehabilitation as a recreational, pedestrian, and bicycle resource.
- Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridge Scenario Planning - The Hinsdale/Brattleboro Existing Bridge Subcommittee is tasked with identifying a vision for the reuse of the existing Hinsdale-Brattleboro Bridges. The purpose of the Existing Bridges Subcommittee "is to develop a vision for the Charles Dana and Anna Hunt Marsh Bridges and Hinsdale Island, including the envisioned activities and uses of the bridges and island, physical changes, management and maintenance considerations, and expected impacts on economic development, tourism, transportation/access, and recreational opportunities." The committee decided to pursue a scenario planning approach to arrive at a recommended vision. WRC, in collaboration with our counterparts in New Hampshire, the Southwest Region Planning Commission, arranged for a UMass Amherst junior landscape architecture design studio to develop a site inventory and analysis and conceptual designs for the reuse of the island. This work was furthered through a contract with a UMass Amherst landscape architecture graduate student.
- Vilas Bridge Community Connections – Continued support for conversations between the Town of Rockingham in Vermont and the Town of Walpole in New Hampshire about the rebuilding and reuse of the Vilas Bridge and other areas where the two towns can collaborate on community and economic development as they relate to transportation connections (including bicycle and pedestrian connections).
- Studying Connections to Increased Rail Service to Greenfield, MA - The WRC is working with our counterparts in Greenfield, Massachusetts, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, to promote use of the Valley Flyer. This rail pilot provides two additional round trips per day from Springfield to Greenfield, and one round trip on the weekends, as part of a 2-year pilot, which will be extended as a result of the cessation of passenger rail because of the pandemic. This

pilot allows for one-seat trips to New York City departing from Greenfield including round trip day trips. We recognize the importance of increased passenger rail service in the larger area to improve mobility and community and economic development. We would like to see the expanded service extend into Vermont, and we are discussing what the implications would be of commuter rail service to southeast Vermont within 10 years.

## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & DISASTER RESILIENCY**

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPC's also help update floodplain bylaws and hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans, and serve as local liaisons between towns and the State Emergency Operations Center in special circumstances like Tropical Storm Irene and other hazard events. This year we assisted towns with their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and communications with state agencies.

- The WRC continued to participate in the region's COVID-19 Community Recovery Committee in collaboration with local service organizations, the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, and local offices of state agencies. We worked to further develop and reinforce the local COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) to both support long-term COVID-19 recovery and be prepared to address other disasters that may occur (especially flooding).
- The WRC develops local hazard mitigation plans for our towns, with the exception of Brattleboro, which created its own.
- WRC assists towns with the annual update of their Local Emergency Management Plans.
- WRC holds quarterly Emergency Management Director (EMD) and Fire Chief Roundtables. Topics are chosen by the EMD and Fire Chief participants.
- The WRC serves as the local liaison to communicate damages and the needs of towns to the State during disasters. WRC staff, in conjunction with the regional ANR River Management Engineers and VTrans Districts 1 and 2, has in place a damage reporting/situational awareness protocol that expedites the gathering of accurate information from towns with the goal of minimizing duplicate requests for information. That protocol is kept updated and shared with new staff members that have a role.
- WRC has an WRC Emergency Planning Committee. The group is available to assist staff with local liaison needs during large events.
- WRC holds trainings and meetings for Floodplain Administrators in the region to learn about topics related to floodplain regulation, as well as to serve as a roundtable discussion opportunity about the responsibilities of the role.
- WRC worked with towns on developing updated flood hazard bylaws, which incorporate state-designated river corridors.
- WRC supported the development of a buyout application to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.
- WRC staff participated in numerous FEMA sponsored trainings as part of the new State Emergency Operations Center training program.
- Staff attended the annual Vermont Emergency Management conference.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM SERVICES**

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPCs provide municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects. In many cases the maps you see in town offices and garages were produced by the WRC.

- GIS staff provided support to the Transportation Planning Initiative for data collection activities, which included culvert inventories, sign inventories, parking inventories, traffic counts, park and ride counts, and bike/ped counts.
- WRC continued their effort to study bike parking in downtown Brattleboro by conducting an inventory of bike racks, and on one day each month of bikes parked in the downtown district.
- Town plan maps were updated in draft or final format, and guidance was given to towns on their maps, for Guilford, Marlboro, and Stratton.
- We helped the Town of Dover in the Village Center application process for West Dover and East Dover village centers.
- GIS staff continues to provide support for transportation-related inventory and mapping work. We updated culvert inventories and/or maps for Guilford, Londonderry, Marlboro, Rockingham, Stratton, Whitingham, and Winhall. Support for towns as they continue to work on compliance with Vermont's Municipal Roads General Permit has been extensive. One aspect of this support is conducting road erosion inventories; we worked on inventories for Guilford, Londonderry, Marlboro, Rockingham, Whitingham, and Winhall, and converted old inventory data to a new format for Grafton, Halifax, Stratton, Townshend, and Westminster.
- WRC continues efforts to provide support for our communities regarding trails and recreation paths. We have assisted committees in Wilmington on their efforts to expand trails and pathways near their downtown, and in Londonderry on mapping. We have updated trail maps for the Town of Wilmington, Retreat Farm, and Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center.
- WRC continues its robust pedestrian counting program on sidewalks, recreation paths, and trails. We undertook 57 counts in 13 towns. We conducted many of our counts to coincide with the same time period in years past to compare use numbers during the coronavirus pandemic to those pre-pandemic. We noticed a significant increase in use on recreation paths and trails, including an increase in bike use.
- WRC continues to do traffic studies, generally at the request of towns. We did 22 studies in eight towns in FY21.
- WRC conducted ten bicycle counts (four on multi-use pathways and six on state or town highways) in four different towns (Brattleboro, Dover, Putney, and Vernon) during FY21.
- WRC provides mapping support to towns when they apply for various grants, including the Town of Newfane for their Bike/Ped grant application.
- Staff continued to provide E911 data and mapping support and E911 map updates to Londonderry and Marlboro.
- GIS staff spent a great deal of time in support of the Municipal Roads Grants in Aid program, working with nearly all our towns on their construction projects that bring road segments into compliance for the Municipal Roads General Permit.
- Staff provide a good deal of support to our town's road foremen. We have created digital maps to be used on tablets in the field for two towns, showing roads, parcels, culverts, and road erosion inventory results.

## **ENERGY CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT**

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable, and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunity and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation, and natural resources planning, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- The WRC has continued to work with public serving institutions as they transition to wood heat through the Windham Wood Heat Initiative. In the past year, the program has assisted 4 institutions (2 schools, 1 set of municipal buildings, and 1 public serving institution) in switching to modern wood heating systems through technical and financial assistance. This program has been a tremendous success and WRC is pleased to be a part of the transition for many public buildings to a cleaner source of heating. The WRC solicits advice on the program and systems from strong local partner organizations. The funding for this \$1.6 million project is through the Clean Energy Development Fund (CEDF), which was made possible through the state's settlement agreement with Entergy Vermont Yankee.
- The WRC worked with Town Energy Committees throughout the region. A regional energy committee gathering was held to share information and collaborate on common weatherization projects. This regional forum will continue to be a support system for our Energy Committees.
- The WRC collaborated on a series of on-line, lunchtime educational programs, called Energy Bites, to introduce energy committee members and regional residents to opportunities available through regional partners. Partners featured in the programs include Green Mountain Power, 3E Thermal, Efficiency Vermont and HeatSquad.

## **WATERSHED PLANNING & PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to implement the state's Clean Water Initiative through basin planning and assistance to municipalities in meeting statutory and regulatory requirements. RPCs also work with municipalities and watershed organizations to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions. The WRC has gone a step further in organizing community efforts to connect people with their watersheds, and to create watershed "identities."

- The WRC worked with its Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) to assist the VT DEC's Watershed Coordinator in drafting the Tactical Basin Plan for the West, Williams and Saxtons Rivers (Basin 11-13). Several watershed meetings were held to gather input from public and town officials. Information provided at the public meetings was incorporated into the Draft Tactical Basin Plan.
- Assisted three municipalities in the process of starting Stormwater Master Plans. Plans are being developed for Brattleboro, Westminster and Rockingham. These plans will help these municipalities and partners identify and target stormwater projects that will significantly improve water quality in the region.
- The WRC continues to administer the Green River Watershed Alliance. This alliance, with support of the High Meadows Fund and VT DEC Watershed grants, addresses environmental

issues, watershed study, place-based education, and ecological restoration within the Green River Watershed. The work of the Alliance highlights the importance of watershed awareness in the Green River watershed for water quality and flood resilience.

- Participated in various collaborative watershed efforts, including:
  - Hosted several meetings of the Saxtons River Watershed Collaborative (SRWC). Worked with town and organizational representatives as well as interested residents to provide water quality and river education. The SRWC hosted several water quality meetings and discussions open to the public.
  - Worked with and staffed the Green River Watershed Alliance in securing a VT DEC Watershed grant to extend public outreach and education.
  - Worked with the Connecticut River Joint Commission's (CRJC) Wantastiquet Local River Subcommittee to link and represent Connecticut River towns to relevant planning issues along the River. WRC serves on the CRJC and our Executive Director currently serves on the Vermont Commission.
- The WRC is the municipal project manager for 3 salt shed projects and 1 culvert replacement project in the region. These transportation related projects all have significant water quality benefits and advance the goals in our region to have more resilient infrastructure in place that also keeps containments out of the region's waterways.
- Successfully assisted with the enrollment of 25 towns in the FY21 Municipal Roads Grants in Aid Program to proactively reimburse towns for road drainage improvements that bring hydrologically-connected road segments up to fully-meeting the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) standards. During FY21, we met with nearly all of these towns and provided guidance, mapping, and reporting on their proposed construction projects, which will be completed during FY22.
- For the previous FY20 Municipal Roads Grants in Aid program, conducted post-constructed site visits and facilitated the reimbursement of about \$340,000 to 22 Windham Region towns that had completed work on their road segments. Over 40 percent of these funds were used at over 20 businesses for labor and/or materials.
- Active participation in the Executive Committee of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC) and the CRJC itself.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

- All regional planning commissions, in collaboration with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, are assisting towns and chartered villages with the process of accessing funding to which they are entitled through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and understanding how those funds may be used per the rules established by the U.S. Treasury. We will also assist towns with planning for how those funds might be used and leveraged to the greatest possible effect.
- Executive Director Chris Campany was appointed to the Vermont Climate Council to represent municipal interests. He serves on the Council Steering Committee, Just Transitions Subcommittee, and Cross Sector Mitigation Subcommittee.
- Led the Windham Region Broadband Project, funded by a Department of Public Service Broadband Innovation Grant, with the goal of producing a feasibility study and business plan to provide access to broadband fiber for unserved and underserved areas within our region. Our consultant team developed a business plan this year and we held a webinar to share the results. WRC provided community engagement and support. The Deerfield Valley Communications

Union District, which organized itself and is recruiting the towns of the region, will implement the business plan and has participated in its development.

- The WRC received funding from the High Meadows Fund (HMF) to support the Windham Connectivity Collaborative, which is focused on policies and implementation strategies to maintain and improve habitat connectivity at the scale of the Windham Region as a whole, and within what we're calling the "southeast connector" which includes towns in the southeastern quadrant of the region. The WRC's partners in this effort include local municipal conservation commissions and their volunteers, the Vermont Land Trust, Windham County Forester, Vermont Fish and Wildlife, VT Coverts, Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District, and the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center. This work is an ongoing initiative beyond the term of the funding from the HMF.
- Continued collaboration with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, and our counterparts in NH and MA, to address the economic impacts of the closure of Vermont Yankee.
- WRC continues to make the case at the Federal level for the substantive inclusion of host communities in the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's policymaking process that is creating nuclear power plant decommissioning policy, as well as the U.S. Department of Energy's consideration of a consent-based spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste siting initiative.
- WRC is a national leader in understanding the importance and impact of nuclear plant decommissioning and its impact on host communities, and continues to participate in the Nuclear Decommissioning Collaborative in an advisory capacity. The purpose of the collaborative is to help mitigate the economic impact of nuclear plant closures.

## **ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING**

Virtually all of the WRC's revenue sources are tied to contracts with scopes of work, guidelines, and/or performance measures. This means that the WRC has limited control over how it chooses to use the vast majority of its funding. Funding received through town assessments is the exception, which makes this funding stream particularly important because it gives us the greatest latitude to respond to WRC-identified needs in the region. Town assessments, and the funding received through the WRC's performance contract with the state, are also necessary to provide matching funds required by grantors. The grants we receive enable us to work with our towns on areas such as transportation, emergency planning, community development, brownfields redevelopment, energy, and natural resources. Revenue from virtually all federal and state grantors requires matching funds, and typically non-federal matching funds. Required match ranges from 10 percent (Transportation Planning Initiative) to 50 percent (Emergency Management Planning Grant). Our budget and work program is available on our [About the WRC page](#) on our website.

The WRC has an audit on an annual basis, and a single audit as required by Federal rules.

The WRC has adopted a [Municipal Services Policy](#) that is intended to provide guidance for the Commission in the delivery of professional services to member municipalities. It describes technical assistance available to member towns as part of the commission's core activities, and the opportunities for expanded service when funded as a special project.

### **'AT WORK' MAP**

A map depicting the range of services provided by the WRC to member municipalities is included on the next page.

# WRC at Work: FY 2021

**Projects**

- Bridge and Culvert Inventory
- Brownfield
- Clean Water
- Economic Development
- Emergency Planning
- Grant Writing
- Mapping
- Planning and Zoning
- Road Erosion Inventory
- Transportation Planning/Traffic Count

**Designation**

- Designated Downtown
- Designated Village
- Neighborhood Development Area

**Town Bylaw Status**

- Adopted
- Flood Only
- None

**Town Plan Status**

- Current
- Expired
- No Town Plan
- County Boundary

