

ADDISON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Addison County Regional Planning Commission Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report

The Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) serves 21 of the 23 municipalities within Addison County (Granville and Hancock lie within Addison County, but fall on the other side of the Green Mountains and are served by the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Planning Commission). ACRPC's 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 size of the municipality, to represent the municipality's interest on ACRPC's Board. Additionally, ACRPC has 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. These committees review various aspects of the commission's business. Commissioners serve on these committees and make recommendations for action to the full Commission. All 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 provides support to the Commission and its committees and execute the Commission's program of work.

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 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 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 helped the Towns of Ferrisburgh, Bridport, Addison, Waltham, Ripton, Shoreham, Lincoln and Panton work on their Town plans within FY16. ACRPC helped bring these plans up to meet statutory requirements, including focusing on economic development and flood resiliency.
 - ◇ **Addison:** Addison completed an 18-month municipal planning grant funded project to complete a town plan revision. This included a community survey with 35% participation, planning area changes to incorporate density-based zoning recommendations for their agricultural areas, among other improvements/updates to the entire plan.

- ◇ **Whiting:** began a town plan update, including incorporation of flood resiliency, energy, and economic development sections within their town plan.
- ◇ **Panton:** began a town plan update process, including a community wide survey (in process), statistical update, flood resiliency and energy siting standards.
- ◇ **Waltham:** completed a plan update with technical assistance provided by ACRPC
- ◆ ACRPC helped the Towns of Bristol and Leicester draft new zoning regulations to implement their respective plans.
- ◆ ACRPC provided technical support to all Zoning Administrators within the Region and held two Zoning Administrator Roundtables.

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 completed updates of the Future Land Use, Introduction and Substantial Regional Impact Sections of its Plan, added an Implementation Section to the Regional Plan and readopted the entire Regional Plan.

ACRPC implemented its plan by focusing a significant portion of its work this year on its three regional centers. It worked to strengthen the infrastructure in Vergennes by helping it to create a master plan to tie the Vergennes Basin to its downtown. In Bristol, ACRPC helped re-write its by-laws and helped to apply for a Community Development Block Grant for a master plan to develop the Stoney Hill Business Park within its Village Planning Area. In Middlebury, ACRPC served 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. Please see Economic and Community Development and Special Projects for more details on each of these undertakings.

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.

- ◆ ACRPC does not have any Brownfields funding of its own at this time. However, it worked with the Towns of Whiting and Ferrisburgh to help secure resources to remediate contaminated properties in their respective villages. Ferrisburgh removed a burnt out building in its village and Whiting continued to work to remediate contaminated property in its village, near its school and fire station, which will open that property for redevelopment potential.

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.

- ◆ ACRPC worked with the Town of Bristol on the Stoney Hill Master Plan it helped write the previous year to create a business park within Bristol’s Village Planning Area. Bristol has traditionally had problems retaining its commercial businesses because they outgrow the Town’s 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 growth of this area.
- ◆ ACRPC worked as a project manager for the City of Vergennes on a City Master Plan funded by a Better Connections Strong Communities Grant it helped write the previous year. ACRPC was the project coordinator and worked with the consultant team and a steering committee from the City of Vergennes. This project analyzed the physical and economic gaps in linking the downtown area with the Otter Creek Basin parks of Vergennes. Through this analysis and through numerous public participatory events, the report prioritizes projects which will maximize recreation opportunities, stimulate the local economy and connect assets.
- ◆ ACRPC worked with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to create regional markers to establish the health and welfare of Addison County and its citizens and supported several grant applications for local businesses.
- ◆ ACRPC helped municipalities include individualized economic development sections in each of the town plans it created above.

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 (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 *Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, Regions and Municipalities*

- ◆ **TAC activity**
 - ◇ ACRPC’s TAC held 10 meetings with an average percentage attendance of 57% (12 out of 21 member municipalities)
- ◆ **TAC Outcomes**
 - ◇ The TAC funded three planning studies during FY2016
 - Middlebury Traffic Calming Study which proposed traffic calming measures for 3 local roads in Middlebury and will serve as a model for efforts on similar roads around the region in the future.
 - Middlebury Creek Road Erosion Stability Study, which examined mitigation alternatives to continually rebuilding Creek Road after flooding events.
 - Addison County Regional Transportation Update (See below)
 - ◇ The TAC successfully petitioned VTrans for a resurfacing project on Route 22A between Bridport and Addison four-corners
 - The TAC provided a forum for a discussion of a truck bypass proposal advanced by the City of Vergennes around the City using other State highways.
- ◆ **Other Outreach**
 - ◇ 8 road foreman meetings held (September – April)

- ◇ 4 Road Safety Audits: Monkton, Weybridge (2015), Leicester, Weybridge (2016)
- ◇ Public Transit E&D meetings: 4
- ◇ Go! Vermont meetings: 2
- ◇ Addison County Transportation Partners meetings: 7
- ◇ ACRPC hosted a Vermont Transportation Board Public Hearing on Wednesday, November 18th
- ◇ Trainings facilitated by ACRPC
 - Jim Ryan’s Act 64 Municipal Roads General Permit presentation/training for TAC
 - Jim Ryan’s Act 64 Municipal Roads General Permit presentation/training for Addison County Road Foreman’s group
 - Alan May’s Better Roads Program presentation/training for Addison County Road Foreman’s group
- ◇ Trainings attended by ACRPC
 - Rivers & Roads Tier II Training – Josh & Tim
 - Road Erosion Evaluation & Inventory Training – Josh & Kevin
 - RPC meetups x 2 – Josh & Claire
 - VLCT Planning & Zoning Forum - Josh
 - Vermont Local Roads Workshop - Josh

◆ **Data Collection**

- ◇ Culvert/bridge inventories: Panton, Bridport, Waltham, Leicester
- ◇ Traffic Counts: Panton, Bristol x 4, Monkton x 2, Ferrisburgh, Shoreham/Cornwall, Waltham
- ◇ Bike/ped counts: Middlebury x 2, Bristol
- ◇ Park & Ride Counts: 3

Objective #2 *Conformance with Act 200 and Facilitating Decentralized Decision Making*

◆ **Status of Regional Transportation Plan**

- ◇ Adopted May 14, 2008
- ◇ Incorporated into Addison County Regional Plan
- ◇ Currently being updated, with anticipated adoption date of January/February 2017

◆ **Participation in Project Development Activities**

- ◇ ACRPC facilitated an access management upgrade at the Downhome Market in East Middlebury, improving parking and access to and from Route 116
- ◇ Scoping of the Weybridge-New Haven Route 17 Bridge 8 over Otter Creek
- ◇ Attended one Accelerated Bridge Program meeting
- ◇ Scoping of the Orwell Town Hwy Bridge 4 over North Fork Creek to support Local Concerns
- ◇ Scoping of the Leicester Town Hwy 12 Bridge 4 Over Leicester River to support local concerns
- ◇ Scoping of the Addison VT 125 Bridge to support local concerns
- ◇ Worked with the Local Project Management Team on the Middlebury Rail Tunnel

Objective #3 *Providing Transportation Planning Support to Municipalities*

- ◆ Performed a Traffic Study Report for the Town of Bristol
- ◆ Created the Middlebury Traffic Calming Study
- ◆ Created apps for culvert and road erosion inventories – eventual goal of having towns utilize

these apps for inventory management on their own

- ◆ Worked with Local Motion to found the Addison County Walk-Bike Advisory Council and facilitated the formation and growth of this regional council
- ◆ Created Whiting and Waltham Transportation Plan updates

Other

- ◆ VTrans Bike/Ped Grant Program:
 - ◇ ACRPC helped Middlebury draft a successful grant application for phases 1 and 2 of the Exchange Street Sidewalk/Shared Use path. ACRPC is also the project manager to construct this project.
 - ◇ ACRPC helped Vergennes draft a successful grant application for Vergennes – North Main Street/Ferrisburgh Road Sidewalk
- ◆ Better Roads Program – provided support for numerous grant applications
 - ◇ Bridport x 2 – Category A provided by ACRPC; 1 of 2 Category Bs funded
 - ◇ Bristol – Category C funded
 - ◇ Lincoln x 3 – Category A & B funded
 - ◇ Monkton – Category D funded
 - ◇ Orwell – Category A provided by ACRPC; Category B funded
 - ◇ Ripton – Category A & C funded
 - ◇ Shoreham – Category B funded
 - ◇ Waltham – Category A provided by ACRPC; Category B funded
- ◆ Class 2 Structures & Paving Program
 - ◇ Bridport
 - ◇ New Haven
- ◆ Comprehensive Energy Plan Forum (includes transportation aspects) coordination & facilitation
- ◆ VECAN Energy & Transportation Regional Roundtable coordination & facilitation
- ◆ Sponsored a table at Addison County Sustainability Expo

Emergency Preparedness and 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. RPCs also help update floodplain bylaws create FEMA-qualified hazard mitigation plans, coordinate updates to municipal emergency plans and assist as needed in special circumstances and declared disasters.

- ◆ Twelve of the twenty-one of municipalities in the Region (57%) currently have a hazard mitigation plan either adopted or under review.
- ◆ Eighteen of twenty one of municipalities in the Region (86%) currently have an updated local emergency plan.
- ◆ ACRPC developed, participated in, and/or hosted four emergency management exercises this fiscal year. They included an emergency management training/workshop for local businesses, a nationally sponsored statewide agriculture exercise, a Vermont Department of Health

C_POD exercise and a Statewide disaster training exercise. Each exercise helped improve the community's preparation for disaster management.

- ◆ Staff trained for Logistics Section Chief, ICS 100, ICS 200, Local Emergency Operations Planning and Rural Emergency Operations Center operations so it could assist the Region in case of disaster. Staff also attended the Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference and the Resilient Vermont Conference to learn and bring local perspective to the discussions.
- ◆ ACRPC hosted and/or developed trainings for local officials in D-Lan (Vermont's Disaster Reporting and Response software), Vermont Alert (Vermont's Disaster notification system), a Spring Flood Workshop, Business Emergency Management planning, and Hazardous Materials reporting. Each workshop improved local communities and agencies ability to respond to disasters.
- ◆ Staff assisted in the creation and coordination of a regional School Safety Group for Addison Northwest Supervisory Union. Staff attended regular Regional Safety meetings and meetings of the Addison County Emergency Planning Committee, helping local groups prepare for and coordinate a regional response to disasters.

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.

- ◆ ACRPC's mapping supports nearly every planning function it performs. Every town plan or zoning bylaw created contains maps produced by ACRPC
- ◆ ACRPC provided mitigation planning maps and data to Salisbury, Leicester, Cornwall and Vergennes, and Bristol
- ◆ ACRPC created an app to support the data gathering efforts that its transportation planner is undertaking to map bridges and culverts within the region. The app, built on an existing software platform allows for the quick and efficient collection, storage and transmittal of road data collected to improve water quality.
- ◆ ACRPC maintained all regional databases

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, 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's Energy Committee updated our Solar Siting Guidelines for municipal plans and distributed the guidelines to all municipalities in the Region. ACRPC also helped several communities with creating a landscaping/screening ordinance that could regulate solar screening as permitted by Act 56.
- ◆ ACRPC's Executive Director participated on the Legislative Summer Study Committee representing regional Planning Commissions in developing recommendations to the legislature that formed the basis of the legislation passed last session.

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 implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

- ◆ ACRPC received an Ecosystems Restoration Program grant (“ERP”) on the behalf of the Town of Middlebury to complete a green stormwater retrofit study in a high priority sub-watershed within the downtown. ACRPC worked with Watershed Associates Consulting to provide 3, 30% designs for green infrastructure systems – improvements on existing stormwater infrastructure, that the Otter Creek Tactical Basin Plan had prioritized. Watershed and ACRPC staff presented the plans to the Town of Middlebury, Infrastructure Committee, ANR and ACRPC’s Commission. Middlebury is contemplating applying for an implementation grant for the work.
- ◆ 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 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 hosted ‘kitchen water chats’.
- ◆ ACRPC staff participate in the Lake Champlain Basin Program’s Technical Advisory Committee.
- ◆ ACRPC works regularly with its municipal members to improve water quality data for their local road systems. See Transportation Planning.

Special Projects

- ◆ ACRPC completed its work with the Town of Monkton on a Viewshed Study. ACRPC worked with a Monkton advisory committee to document unique views and features of the Town. The project incorporated significant public input and will be used by Monkton to help shape future land use decisions.
- ◆ This year ACRPC partnered with Local Motion of Burlington to form an Addison County Walk-Bike Council. ACRPC and Local Motion are assisting the new members of the council in writing their initial workplan and appoint tasks to four working sub-committees. The council includes representatives from across Addison County with a mission to improve and increase the opportunity for safer walking and cycling to all in Addison County. The key topics which the council is focused on include: infrastructure improvements, education and outreach, safety and law enforcement and cultural shift.
 - ◇ Sub-committee work will include/but not limited to: technical review of street plans, safe routes work with schools, marketing multi-modal transport for a cultural shift away from single-occupancy trends, and partnership/relationship building with regional law enforcement agencies.
- ◆ ACRPC serves as the municipal project manager on three sidewalk/shared use path improvement projects within the town of Middlebury connecting Middlebury’s downtown with other portions of town including its industrial area, a retail area known as the MarbleWorks and neighborhoods in Middlebury and Weybridge that provide a popular walking route around the downtown.

Administration and 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 fund-

ing. For the 2016 fiscal year, ACRPC's total projected revenue of approximately \$709,000 dollars was derived from 78 percent regional project grant funding, 10 percent municipal project grant funding, 6 percent state performance contract funding, and 6 percent town assessments. While percentages may vary slightly from year to year, the year was typical of our 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. They provide 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 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 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 2015, its most recent audit as in past years, there were no significant findings. ACRPC's audit for FY 2016 will be completed by December 2016.

ACRPC at Work: FY 2016

