Addison County Regional Planning Commission
FY 2019 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 size 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 and flood resiliency planning. 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 and Monkton to re-write their municipal plans.
- ACRPC helped the Towns of Shoreham, Cornwall, Waltham and Ripton draft new zoning regulations to implement their plan.
- ACRPC provided technical support to all Zoning Administrators within the Region and held two Zoning Administrator Roundtables.
- ACRPC conducted municipal consultations in Vergennes, Salisbury, Orwell and Bristol.
- ACRPC helped the Towns of Addison and Orwell work on Village Center Designations.

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 spent significant amounts of time working to revise the Energy, Population and Housing and Economic Development Sections of its Regional Plan. It passed its enhanced Energy Plan on July 18th, 2018 just at the beginning of the fiscal year. ACRPC implements its Plan by focusing a significant portion of its work on downtowns and village centers. In Middlebury, 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. ACRPC also wrote and is helping to implement a Lake Champlain Basin Program Grant to create a plan to improve wastewater and stormwater infrastructure in the Town of Bristol. In Addison, Orwell, Shoreham and Whiting, ACRPC helped the local volunteer planning commissions focus on improving village centers. Please see Economic and Community Development and Special Projects for more details on each of these undertakings.

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. This year ACRPC addressed issues with the Towns of Middlebury and Ferrisburgh.

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 worked 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 study proposed some interim traffic calming measures on Main Street which will be implemented this year (2020) and proposed a new economic development corridor within the City to help get the trucks out of the downtown. ACRPC and the City of Vergennes continue to work with VTrans to pursue that long-term solution.
- ACRPC is working jointly with the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to create a Regional Economic Development plan that will serve as a portion of the 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 worked with the Town of Shoreham to plan for the redevelopment of the Farnham Parcel, a 300-acre town owned property bordering its village to the north.

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 20 different people representing 17 of the Region’s communities.
b. ACRPC also coordinated project meetings on 11 separate projects or planning topics. These included:
   - 22A Truck Mitigation Study
   - Walk Bike Council and 2020 Walk Bike Summit, Triangle Bike Loop
   - Safety/Redesign at on Route 7 Ferrisburgh - Old Hollow Rd, Route 125, New Haven - Sawyer Rd.
   - Road Foremen Meetings
   - Middlebury Tunnel replacement, Middlebury Better Connections
   - Tri-Valley Transit, E&D Committee
   - Middlebury Airport Planning

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 filed transportation-specific comments in Tractor Supply’s Act 250 hearing and in GMP Ferrisburgh’s 248 hearing. ACRPC also participated extensively in Tri Valley Transits planning committees and activities. ACRPC staff served on the Executive, Finance, Development, Nominating and E&D Committees. ACRPC staff also contributed regional and local information to three VTrans planning committees, including the committees creating the Bike/Ped Policy Plan, the Aviation Policy Plan and its Transit Policy Plan. Lastly, ACRPC’s TAC worked to Prioritize VTrans projects within the Region.

Objective #3: Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities
ACRPC spent approximately seventy-eight percent (78%) of its transportation budget helping its member municipalities. Activities included road foremen meetings for 17 of its member towns, assisting municipalities with seven transportation related grants, conducting municipal transportation inventories in five communities, conducting three municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies; helping two communities write the transportation sections of their town plans and conducting 10 road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP.
Objective #4: Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans
ACRPC conducted 14 separate data collection activities for VTrans. Work included collecting “Complete Streets” data, two Park and Ride Counts and MIRE work.

Objective #5: Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education
ACRPC participated in outreach to communities following extreme weather events three times under direction from DEMS, assisted in continuing communication involving an ice-jam in Starksboro that threatened a road, participated in outreach and planning for the Middlebury bridge project, coordinated community meetings for the 22A study, and conducted outreach on behalf of the community following a fatal accident on VT 125 highlighting community safety concerns about that roadway.

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.

- Fifteen of the twenty-one municipalities in the Region (71%) currently have a hazard mitigation plan (LHMP) either adopted or under review.
- Eighteen of twenty-one of municipalities in the Region (86%) currently have an annually updated local emergency management plan (LEMP).
- ACRPC participated in one emergency management exercise this fiscal year, including the town of Vergennes, first responders, and the Collins Aerospace-UTC corporation, that helped improve the community’s preparation for disaster management.
- Staff attended the Vermont Emergency Preparedness Conference and the Resilient Vermont workshops 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 supports nearly every planning function it performs. Every town plan or zoning bylaw created contains maps produced by ACRPC.
- ACRPC received the VPA Planning Project of the Year award for the App it created to support the data gathering efforts that its transportation planner 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 transmittal of road and culvert data collected to improve water quality.

- ACRPC maintained all regional databases.

**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 completed work on the Energy Section of its Regional Plan, including creating maps and land use projects regarding the region’s ability to host local energy generation resources sufficient to meet its share of generation necessary to support the State of Vermont’s goal of producing 90% of its energy from renewable sources by 2050. ACRPC adopted its Regional Energy plan at the beginning of the fiscal year on July 17, 2018.
- ACRPC worked with five new municipalities 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 (Leicester, Salisbury, Ripton, Weybridge, Monkton 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.

**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 efforts and regulations, which result in better 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 a 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.”
- ACRPC staff participates 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.
- ACRPC worked as project administrator for a project to create a master stormwater plan for Bristol Village.
- ACRPC worked with ANR’s Basin Planner to help re-write the Otter Creek Basin Plan to incorporate the municipal data and projects it had collected.
SPECIAL PROJECTS
RPCs Work on a number of unique projects each year. Examples at ACRPC include:

• ACRPC serves as the municipal project manager on two sidewalk/shared use path improvement projects within the Towns of Middlebury and Weybridge. These projects enhance a popular walking route that connects Middlebury’s downtown with other portions of town, including its industrial area, and neighborhoods in Middlebury and Weybridge. The Exchange Street Sidewalk project is in the process of procuring rights of way. Construction began on the Pulp Mill Bridge/Seymour Street sidewalk in May to be completed in July 2019.

• ACRPC served as the host for monthly meetings of Conservation Commission representatives pursuing reclassification of all or part of the Otter Creek wetland complex as a Class I wetland. ACRPC provided maps and mailing information for communicating with area landowners.

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 2019 fiscal year, ACRPC’s total revenue of approximately $699,000 dollars was derived from 91 percent state and federal grants supporting regional projects, 3 percent municipal project grant funding, and 6 percent from town assessments. While percentages may vary slightly from year to year, the year was typical of ACRPC received 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 2018, 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 2019 will be completed by December 2019.

‘AT WORK’ MAP
The map depicting the range of services provided by the ACRPC to member municipalities is included on the next page.