

**Vermont Traffic Committee
Minutes of Meeting Held
December 12, 2023**

The Vermont Traffic Committee met on Tuesday December 12, 2023. Committee Chair Michael Smith called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm at the VTrans Dill Building in Berlin, VT, and online via Microsoft Teams. The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 pm.

Attendees:

Dept Commissioner Michael Smith, DMV, Traffic Committee Chair
Lt. Paul Ravelin, Vermont State Police, Department of Public Safety
Evangeline James, Assistant Attorney General

Ian Degutis, VTrans Traffic Operations Engineer, Traffic Committee Coordinator

Alec Jones, Lamoille County Planning Commission, Eden
Christina Clark, Resident, Shrewsbury
LeAnn Denault, East Wallingford resident, Shrewsbury
Alice and Paddy Martin, Residents, Shrewsbury
Martha Sirjane, Resident, Shrewsbury
Bob Snarski, Volunteer Fire Department, Shrewsbury
Francis Wyatt, Selectboard Member, Shrewsbury

Kristin Driscoll, VTrans Traffic Operations
Joe Kelly, VTrans Traffic Operations
Steffanie Lemieux, VTrans Traffic Operations
Marcos Miller, VTrans Traffic Operations
Sarah Ramsay, VTrans Traffic Operations
Josh Schultz, VTrans Bureau Director
Josh Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations
Brad Woods, VTrans Traffic Operations

Agenda Items Discussed

- **Eden, VT-100,**

Mr. Degutis explained the request for a reduced speed limit on VT-100 near the fishing access on the north end of Lake Eden and came in over a year ago. A year ago, the Traffic Committee requested to table the item and have additional speed studies completed once additional signage for the boat ramp had been installed and the passing zone was closed off, which were improvements identified for that meeting. The closed passing zone was not appropriately remarked in 2023 but will be corrected in 2024.

An engineering study was conducted in 2023 including two speed studies which showed an insignificant change from the 2022 studies and poor compliance with the existing 50 mph speed limit. Mr. Degutis explained the 85th percentile and how it is one factor used when setting speed limits. There will be additional sign upgrades near the boat ramp and more brush clearing in the state right of way. The roadway character looks like a 50 mph road so the recommendation is to retain the existing speed limit.

Mr. Jones did not have any comments but stated that this is not what the selectboard had hoped for.

The Traffic Committee voted to approve Traffic Operations' recommendation.

- **Shrewsbury, VT-103, Speed Limit**

Mr. Degutis explained this request is on VT-103 in the village of Cuttingsville and was originally from 2021. The recommendation in 2021 was to retain the existing speed limit and the Traffic Committee voted to expand the 35 mph zone to be about 1.5 miles through the village to Spring Lake Rd. As part of the change, the Traffic Committee requested a follow up study after one year to see the effectiveness of the change. In 2022, additional speed studies were done, and the recommendation was to return to the previous speed limits and increase enforcement. The town indicated they had difficulty finding enforcement, so the item was tabled for another year. In 2023, additional speed studies were conducted, which showed that 85th percentile speeds were relatively unchanged and well over the speed limit for all locations. Mr. Degutis presented a variety of speed data demonstrating that speeds have not changed significantly and compliance is poor. The recommendation is to return the posted speed limits to the previous speed limits and increase enforcement.

Mr. Wyatt, on behalf of the selectboard, said they support retaining the current speed limit and the speed limit reduction was requested because of the fatalities. The Town has since secured 4 hours per week from the Rutland Sheriff focused on VT-103 but some hours were spent at other places in the town. He thinks the town should have contracted more hours from the sheriff and are considering increasing the hours in 2024 because 4 hours per week isn't enough to create a change. There is cell phone coverage which causes distracted driving, and the map apps aren't up to date, so they show the old speed limits. The July flooding also took out a sign on the north end which was down for a month. Spring Lake Rd has up to 250 cars per day and it's on a curve so there is poor sight distance which is also a concern.

More generally he disagrees with changing the speed limit based solely on the 85th percentile and the 50th percentile seems more reasonable which did decline. People have also become less rational drivers so we can't rely on people's good judgement to set speed limits.

A number of residents spoke to say they feel that the speeds have declined and closing the passing zone has made the road feels safer. They also said, if some cars slow down it slows people down behind them and people will always go over the speed limit but more enforcement will help, and the speed feedback sign has helped. They asked whose responsibility it is to change the speed limit on GPS devices.

Mr. Degutis agrees that the 85th percentile speed is not the only factor because that would suggest the speed limit should be increased through Cuttingsville, which he does not support. Spring Lake Road has about 600 ft of sight distance which meets the minimum sight distance for a 50 mph intersection, there is also an intersection warning sign on the other side of the bridge. GPS and vehicle data is the responsibility of a third-party vendor and VTrans doesn't have influence over it but there is sufficient signage and it's the driver's responsibility to comply with the signs.

Lt. Ravelin clarified that there were only 4 hours of enforcement per week. Based on the traffic study, there is some reduction in speed but more needs to be done so that, whatever the speed limit is, it can be enforced properly. He also confirmed that there is a speed feedback sign which was in place at different points along the corridor most of the summer.

Mr. Smith motioned to table this item until the next meeting so this can be revisited with committee members who have more history with the item. The Traffic Committee voted to table this item.

- **Brookfield, VT-65, Speed Limit**

Mr. Degutis explained this request is on VT-65 which is an unpaved state highway. The request is to reduce the speed limit from the existing 35 from Bear Hill Rd to West St. One speed study was completed with pneumatic tubes and found the 85th percentile to be 36 mph at what looked to be the fastest point in the study area. Traffic Operations recommends reducing the existing 35 mph speed limit to 30 mph from a point just west of Bear Hill Rd to the existing 30 mph zone, which is a slightly longer area than requested, as well as some suggested signage upgrades to the town.

The Traffic Committee voted to approve Traffic Operations' recommendation.

- **Essex, VT-15, Speed Limit**

Mr. Degutis explained this is located on VT-15 on the easterly end of Essex, near Jericho, in the vicinity of Whitcomb Meadows Lane and the existing Traffic Committee certificate contains an error which has conflicting descriptions. The community requested to move the sign, believing it to be misplaced and would like Whitcomb Meadows Lane included in the 40 mph zone. Traffic Operations staff reviewed the certificate and determined the sign was placed as intended by the Traffic Committee; subsequently the Town officially requested to extend this 40 mph zone to Saxon Hill which is approximately 3/10 mile. Three speed studies showed a change in the prevailing speeds and the 85th percentile dropping as the character changes, even though they are not in compliance with the speed limit. Traffic Operations recommends the 40 mph zone be extended to a point east of Whitcomb Meadows Lane where there is a natural transition location but not quite as far as the town requested. This will also address the issue in the current certificate.

The Traffic Committee voted to approve Traffic Operations' recommendation.

Additional Agenda Item:

- **Georgia, VT 104**
The existing speed limit certificate uses outdated references. Signs will be placed approximately at the same place and the certificate will be updated. The Traffic Committee voted to approve this update.
- **Traffic Committee Administrative Rules**
Ms. James gave an update on the ongoing effort to update the Traffic Committee administrative rules. No action is required at this time.

Deputy Commissioner Smith adjourned the meeting at 2:29 pm.

Minutes prepared by Joshua Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations, and submitted via Ian Degutis, Traffic Operations Engineer/Traffic Committee Coordinator.

These minutes were approved by email on 12/22/2023