

Vermont Traffic Committee
DRAFT - Minutes of Meeting Held
December 15, 2022

The Vermont Traffic Committee met on Thursday December 15, 2022. Committee Chair Joe Flynn called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm on a virtual Microsoft Teams call. A physical location was also available and open for anyone to attend in person at the VTrans Dill Building in Berlin, VT. The meeting was adjourned at 3:13 pm.

Attendees:

Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation, Traffic Committee Chair
Acting Lt. Paul Ravelin, Vermont State Police

Ian Degutis, VTrans Traffic Operations Engineer, Traffic Committee Coordinator

Bob Snarsky

Alyssa Stewart

Brandon Gulnick – Town Manager - Weathersfield

Bill Daniels – Police Chief - Weathersfield

Ray Stapleton – Highway Foreman - Weathersfield

Chris Clarke, Resident, Shrewsbury

Martha Sirjane – Resident – Shrewsbury

Lea Ann Farley – Resident – E. Wallingford (for Shrewsbury item)

Shauna Clifford, VTrans District 7

Bill Page, Road Foreman, Bradford

Bill Jenkins, Law Enforcement Liaison, State Highway Safety Office

Shane O’Keefe, Town Administrator - Londonderry

Francis Wyatt, Select person, Shrewsbury

Joe Kelly, VTrans Traffic Operations

Marcos Miller, VTrans Traffic Operations

Josh Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations

Bradley Woods, VTrans Traffic Operations

Agenda Items Discussed

- **Weathersfield, VT-131, Speed Limit**

Mr. Degutis explained the request is on VT-131 to reduce the speed existing limit for the entire 50 mph zone between Downers Corner to the interstate, and review the intersections. This item was tabled at the October meeting of this year due to time constraints.

As part of the engineering study five speed studies were conducted which showed that the 85th percentile speeds were approximately 3-6 mph over the posted 50 mph speed limit which shows relatively good compliance. The 85th is the speed below which 85 percent of vehicles are travelling. They are done for an hour or 100 vehicles and measure free flow speed. The 85th percentile is one of several factors used as well as road character and engineering judgement when determining an appropriate speed limit. The MUTCD says speed limits should be posted within 5 mph of the 85th percentile and having the speed limit match the way most people are driving is beneficial. Speed studies are done with a radar gun in an unmarked car.

Traffic Operations recommends maintaining the 50 mph speed along this stretch and increasing enforcement.

Mr. Gulnick says people drive within a certain range of the speed limit so drivers might follow the new 40 mph speed limit adjustment. Mr. Degutis responded that national and local studies have shown that, without character changes, just changing the speed limits doesn't change the driver speed because many people drive the speed at which they feel comfortable.

Mr. Stapleton says a couple trucks were hit along here during winter maintenance and there have been some near misses from people turning on or off the road. There are some vegetation and sight distance issues which cause visibility issues due to the sharp angle of the curves and hills.

Mr. Degutis explained that VTrans Traffic Operations met with the town and VTrans District Maintenance staff and talked about brush issues and the district was going to work to better maintain the brush. Some vegetation is out of the state right of way which means the town needs to reach out to property owners. They also looked at warning signage at these intersections and what improvements that can be made. Intersection warning signs ahead of the intersections of concern was discussed as well as moving some street signs along with other more advanced options. Lt. Ravelin says that cutting brush back sounds like the most cost-effective solution. Mr. Gulnick asked what reason there is to not change the speed limit. Secretary Flynn says a lower speed limit might not slow anyone down and it could just cause more people to be speeding. He thinks there needs to be more attention on brush cutting and improving signage and suggested trying 45 mph instead of 40 mph. The town was amenable to that.

Mr. Degutis says that one challenge in dropping the speed limit below 85th percentile speed is that many of the standards for warning signs are relative to the posted speeds, so some of the warning signs wouldn't be warranted at a lower speed limit, so if the speeds don't change but the warning signs are removed then there would be the same situation without the warning sign. 45 mph is more in line with the travel speeds so it might be a good compromise. Secretary Flynn moved to change the speed limit to 45 mph.

The Traffic Committee voted to approve the 45 mph speed as proposed by Secretary Flynn.

- **Bradford, US-5, No Parking**

Mr. Degutis explained the request from VTrans District 7 DTA Booth is to create a winter No Parking zone in the northern end of Bradford Village on US-5 from Wells River Savings Bank through the narrow curve to the Bradford Church where parked cars can create challenges for

winter maintenance. The Town of Bradford is supportive of this request and has undertaken significant public outreach on the topic. Some people park here for church and funerals but during the winter it is mostly residents who park here. Traffic Operations' recommendation is to create the seasonal No Parking zone from November 1 through April 30.

The Traffic Committee voted to accept Traffic Operations recommendation.

- **Londonderry, VT-100, Speed Limit**

Mr. Degutis explained the request is on VT-100 to reduce the speed limit from 50 mph as it approaches the stop condition at VT-11 to match the other similar approaches in the area. As part of the engineering study, two speed studies were conducted which showed that speeds were below the posted speed limit. There is also a large shopping complex near the intersection. Traffic Operations' recommendation is to create a 40 mph zone beginning near Alexander's Martial Arts and extending northerly for about a half mile, then a 30 mph zone for about three-quarters of a mile up to the stop condition at VT-11. Shane O'Keefe says the town supports the recommendation.

The Traffic Committee voted to approve Traffic Operations recommendation.

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

Mr. Degutis explained this was a item appeared before the Committee about a year ago and the Towns' request was to reduce the speed limit on VT-103 through the village of Cuttingsville. The Traffic Committee voted to reduce the speed limit with the condition that it was revisited in one year.

As part of the follow-up engineering study, additional speed studies were conducted at approximately the same time of year and in the same locations as the previous study measuring how much effect the change in speed limit had on driver behavior. Even with the posted speed reduction, the 85th percentile speeds show little to no change from the speeds measured a year ago and cars are now going well over the posted speed limit. Traffic Operations' recommendation is to return the speed limits to the previous speed limits.

Mr. Wyatt- speaking on behalf of the Selectboard- says the town has a speed cart and can now contract with Rutland County sheriff, which has only recently been able to be staffed. They do not want to see the speed limit go back up. He acknowledged the fatalities may not have caused by speed but maybe they would have not been fatalities if the speeds have been slower. Mr. Wyatt also noted that the mean and mode speeds did decline so there was an effect even if it's not reflected in the 85th percentile speeds and he asks that the Traffic Committee retain the current reduced speed limit.

Ms. Farley drives the road a lot but does not live in Shrewsbury. She finds it hard to accept that the speed limit is 35 mph through this whole stretch and thinks it should go back to what it was. She noted the fatalities were in the previous 35 and 40 mph zones.

Ms. Sirjane understands Ms. Ann's perspective but noted there is a blind corner and lots of near misses as well as other concerns with signage.

Mr. Snarski is the safety officer for the Fire Department and has seen a lot of crashes through here in tenure, but he's seen a tremendous difference with the reduced speed. Since the speed limit was changed he says there has been only one crash in 2021-22 and there was three per year before the change.

Ms. Stewart remembers fatalities here and there are now more apartments in the area so there are lots of people are pulling in and out of driveways and businesses. She doesn't want to go back and feels and it would cause more confusion to drivers.

Lt. Ravelin wants to clarify that no one has been doing enforcement this year through here. The numbers here show that some places have an increase in speed yet people are saying that its better. He said that one fatality was impaired and one was going under 50 mph. He suggested additional steps could be taken like brush control and better signage. Increasing visibility and giving time to exit the driveways and take the turns in conjunction with education may help reduce the stress of pulling out onto VT-103. The speed signs or enforcement alone may not be enough. Bill Jenkins says there is clearly a lack of enforcement and it would be interesting to see if the additional enforcement helps even though it is only 4 hours per week.

Secretary Flynn says there might not be harm to allow more time to review this to see if the education and enforcement make a difference and revisit this in a year. Lt. Ravelin says that since the town was proactive in getting enforcement and the speed cart, he would be happy to see what happens a year from now.

There was also discussion of a warning sign at the northerly end of the study area; Mr. Degutis explained that it had been removed as part of a sign project through the area in about 2018, and agreed that Traffic Operations would reinstall the sign as requested.

The Traffic Committee voted to retain the existing speed limits, and revisit the topic again in one year. The Committee also noted that if in a year the data doesn't show a decrease in speeds then maybe we need to look at something else.

- **Brandon, VT-73, No Parking**

Mr. Degutis explained the request is to create a No Parking zone along the northerly side of VT-73 in the vicinity of the elementary school beginning at the intersection with Route 53 and extending past the school to the westerly end of the school property. There appears to be a school driveway which would allow parking for pick-ups and drop-offs instead of on the road. Traffic Operations' recommendation is to create this No Parking zone.

The Traffic Committee voted to accept Traffic Operations recommendation.

Additional Agenda Items:

- **Stowe-Cambridge, VT-108**

Mr. Degutis explained that in the course of reviewing some records, a still-active certificate prohibiting trucks over Smuggler's Notch was discovered; after reviewing Statute and discussing with TC Legal Counsel Gordon Landrigan, the certificate was found to have been superseded by current statutory language. To avoid a conflict, it is recommended the Traffic Committee certificate be repealed.

Traffic Committee approved the recommendation to repeal this Certificate.

Secretary Flynn adjourned the meeting at 3:13 pm.

Minutes prepared by Joshua Taylor, VTrans Traffic Operations, and submitted via Ian Degutis, Traffic Operations Engineer/Traffic Committee Coordinator. Approved by email [x-x-2022](#)