

Bennington Region TAC mtg  
5/25/2022 at 3pm

Present:

Anders, Mark	BCRC Staff	✓
Black, Gordon	Town of Manchester staff and BCRC Commissioner	✓
Cuenca, Fredericka	N. Bennington	✓
Dzialo, Karen	Sandgate	
Faley, Rob	VTrans District 1	✓
Hand, Jim	Dorset BCRC Rep	✓
Herrington, Megan	VT DOH	
Klinger, Walter	Pownal BCRC rep	✓
Lierman, Bruce	North Bennington BCRC Commissioner	
Monks, Dan	Bennington Assistant Town Manager	✓
Otto, Katharine	VTrans, Policy & Planning	✓
Rockwell, Charlie	Rupert BCRC Commissioner	
Wallace, Beth	Bennington County Headstart	✓
Ware, Jim	GMCN	
White, Terence	GMCN	
Zaiac, Nick	Arlington Town Administrator, TAC Chair	✓
Sullivan, Jim	BCRC	✓
Hurley, Janet	BCRC	✓

**Minutes:**

**1. Open discussion**

Walter: raised 3 issues:

1. Pownal is hosting large War of Independence anniversary celebration next year. It would be good if passenger rail could be offered as an alternative to driving.
2. Regarding propane rail cars parked in N. Bennington: can sidings be constructed to store them more safely?
3. There is a lot of trash on Route 7 in Pownal. Was told the Town couldn't do anything about it because it is a state highway.

Katharine: reach out to Tony or Zoe at VTrans about the rail car fuel storage.

Rob: VTrans District 1 has also noticed more trash on Route 7 and has added more clean-ups to the schedule.

Nick: we should talk more about rail in the future.

**2. Possible cancelation of the southern leg of the Bennington Bypass project**

Mark: Jesse Devlin at VTrans mentioned that the state maybe ready to cancel the bypass project. The Agency will meet with the TAC later this winter to discuss it.

Jim Sullivan: gave history of the projects. The project is decades old and was originally supposed to be a reconstruction of Route 7 from the Mass border through Bennington and on north. The improved highway was not put in from Pownal Center through Bennington because it is too difficult to build a limited access highway through downtown Bennington. The bypass project was designed as a solution. The focus switched to east-west travel and the other two legs of the bypass were built first. Clough Harbour's study found that the southern legs would reduce traffic in Bennington more than the other 2 legs, but people began questioning the project. Most truck traffic is local because through trucks take Route 22, so it would not reduce truck traffic through town – one of the big project rationales. Local political support faded.

Dan: the project has zero support among Town staff. Is there another way to address the project purpose and need before giving the money back to the feds?

Jim Sullivan : the Clough Harbour study found the bypass would improve air quality in downtown.

Rob: We might not have to give the money that was spent back to the feds because it was used for the western leg project as a place to dispose of fill. Houses were bought and taken down.

Dan: doesn't thing the project any select board support.

Mark: any studies on the economic impacts of the two legs that were built?

Jim Sullivan: only anecdotal evidence that there was a decline in business downtown.

Bill: the museum and Camelot Village cited declines. There would be complaints about the economic impacts if the project was going to happen.

Jim Sullivan: could there be safety and transportation improvements on the corridor in lieu of the project. For example, many homeless housed at the motels walk on the narrow highway shoulder. Also, problem with fatal crashes on the stretch between Bennington and Pownal Center.

Mark: what about the land that was acquired. Could it be used for a park or path?

Rob: the land is encumbered until the project is cancelled. But then it could be used by the Town or for another public purpose for example One World Conservation Center now has trails on it.

Jim Sullivan: the Town could build a road on it with a path.

Dan: the Town has a 1111 Permit for a path.