

February 7, 2022

Secretary Joe Flynn
Vermont Agency of Transportation
219 North Main St.
Barre, VT 05641

RE: Comments and Questions on Engineering Plans for Richmond-Bolton STP 2924(1)

Dear Secretary Flynn,

I would like to begin by thanking you for having your team at VTrans send the engineering plans for the Rt. 2 repaving project for review by the Town. We understand that these plans were provided to Town Staff on January 13, 2022 with a deadline of January 21, 2022 for comments. Richmond Town Manager Josh Arneson replied on January 21, 2022 with comments. We appreciate that in response to those comments the following changes were made:

- There will be a minimum of four-foot shoulders throughout the highway interchange area. This is an improvement from the plans which showed shoulders in that area as narrow as three feet.
- There will be a “No Right Turn on Red” Blank-Out LED sign which will alert drivers entering the Bridge St. intersection from Jericho Rd. when traffic on Bridge St. has a left turn arrow.
- VTrans is open to scheduling a meeting to discuss the placement of stormwater structures on East Main St. and how those structures can better integrate with the sidewalks that the Town will install. We look forward to this meeting and to working on implementing a successful stormwater management plan.

However, given that Town staff only had one week to review and respond to the plans it is natural that there would be more questions and concerns raised after a more detailed review of the plans. The Richmond Transportation Committee reviewed the plans at their January 25, 2022 meeting. At this meeting there were concerns expressed about how many sections showed shoulders at less than five feet. The following motion passed unanimously.

It is the opinion of the Transportation Committee that the shoulder widths identified in the VTrans plans between the Park and Ride and the village are more than pinch points and present an unsafe infrastructure for pedestrians, bicyclists and vulnerable users of Route 2 for transportation. The Transportation Committee requests VTrans to minimize the length of the pinch points and ensure five-foot shoulders as much as feasible without incurring exorbitant costs.

Mr. Arneson relayed the following concern to VTrans on January 26.

- On page 72 the shoulders are 1.5' and 3' in places. We request that these be expanded to 5'.

Matthew Bogaczyk of VTrans responded as follows:

- Specific to sheet 72, this section is just as vehicles are entering the village setting in Richmond. The road is sandwiched between a steep uphill slope on the left and a steep downgrade on the right. Unfortunately, the full 5' typical could not be carried through this section given the topographic constraints. The project is planning to reduce to an 11' lane and 3' shoulder beginning near the large gravel turn around drives and carrying into the sidewalk sections where it will replace the existing widths. You noted that there is a section where the should drops to 1' 5" on the left. This is due to an already steep embankment with a house very close to the road. We did not propose moving this slope closer to the house and potentially making it steeper. Instead, the shoulder is reduced to the necessary 1' 5" and then extended back to 3' all within approximately 100' before encountering the Town's sidewalk sections. The total distance with reduced shoulder widths is approximately 300' before reaching the curbed and sidewalk section.

This response is inadequate and it does not adhere to the agreement to maintain five-foot shoulders with the exception of a few pinch points. While we understand that there are some obstacles in this area, these obstacles are not insurmountable. They could be overcome with some excavation and stone to increase the width of the shoulders in this section. There appears to be enough Right Of Way in this area to accommodate the work. We had discussed that there would be a few pinch points where five-foot shoulders would not be possible and we are willing to accept that. However, 300 feet of reduced shoulder width is more than a pinch point. This would put pedestrians and bicyclists in a dangerous situation for the length of a football field, and on a section of road that is already dangerous due to the slope.

We understand that there are existing culverts that are prohibiting five-foot shoulders in some areas. This was discussed at the January 3, 2022 Richmond Selectboard meeting. At that meeting the Board asked if these culverts could be replaced during this project, allowing the shoulder to be widened to five feet. Mr. Arneson posed this question to Mr. Bogaczyk. Mr. Bogaczyk responded to say that one culvert is scheduled to be replaced in 2024 or 2025. Depending on how that project proceeds that work could move quickly enough to coincide with the current project.

While it is welcome news to hear that the culvert project may align with the paving project we ask that VTrans work to ensure that the culvert project does coincide with the paving project. Further, we request that all culverts which are prohibiting the five-foot shoulder width be replaced in concert with the paving project. The paving project is a huge undertaking, which is very expensive and will cause major traffic delays for Vermonters. It just makes sense to get as much work completed with the current project as possible to reduce expenses, prevent future traffic congestion, and address key safety concerns as soon as possible.

We look forward to hearing how you will be able to address these topics which will improve the safety of all Vermonters who utilize this section of Rt. 2.

Thank you,

Christine Werneke, Richmond Selectboard Chair

CC:

Representative Jana Brown

Senator Philip Baruth

Senator Thomas Chittenden

Senator Virginia "Ginny" Lyons

Senator Christopher A. Pearson

Senator Kesha Ram

Senator Michael Sirotkin

Richmond Selectboard Vice Chair David Sander

Richmond Town Manager Josh Arneson

Richmond Road Foreman Pete Gosselin

VTrans Project Delivery Bureau Director Robert White

VTrans Project Manager Matthew Bogaczyk

VTrans Highway Safety & Design Program Manager Jesse Devlin

Stantec Senior Associate Marc Foisy

Nicholas Pappas, VTrans

Glenn Burgmeier, Stantec