



Regional Planning Commissions Overview & FY22 Results

January 19, 2023

**Presented to: House Committee on
Transportation**



Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) strengthen the capability & capacity of our cities and towns and the State.



In the absence of county government, RPCs connecting communities with federal and state funding and programs to solve local problems.

RPCs are political subdivisions of the State of Vermont, uniquely positioned to **provide broad services** to every Vermont municipality:



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



LAND USE PLANNING



AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN ALL AREAS



WATER QUALITY



HAZARD MITIGATION & PREPAREDNESS



HOUSING



BROWNFIELD ASSESSMENT & REMEDIATION



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ENERGY PLANNING

State Policy and Implementation

With our on-the-ground experience, RPCs are a critical resource for the state in policy deliberations and implementation.

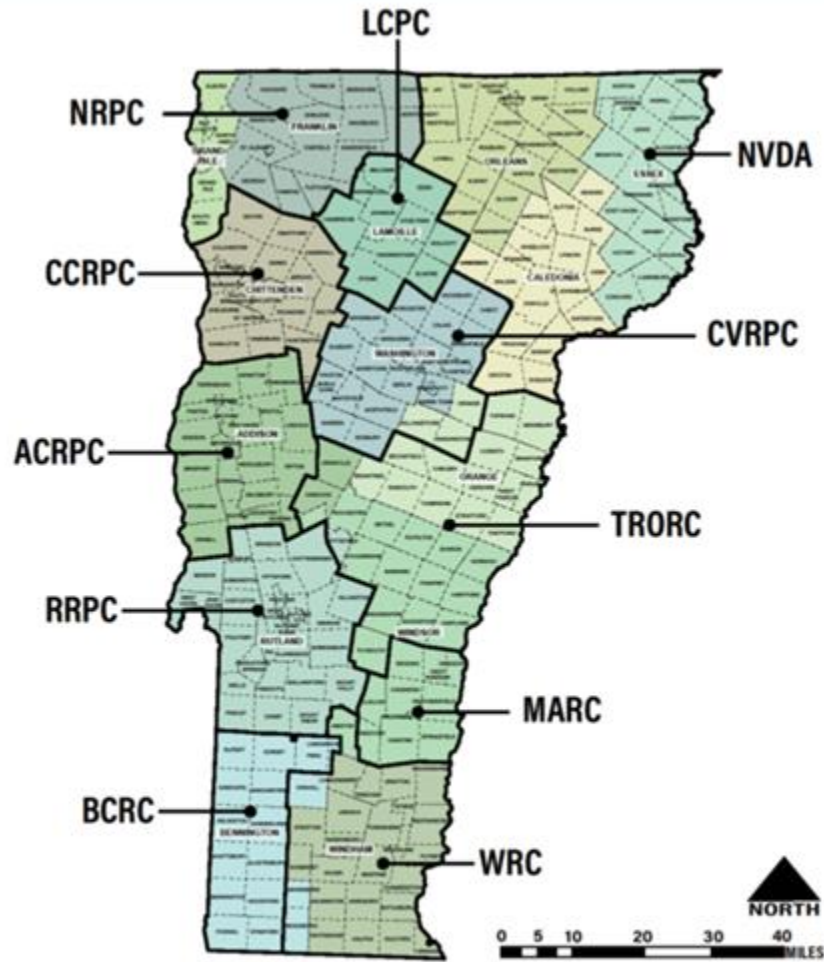


RPCs are a direct link between municipalities and state government and are often called upon to support policy development and implementation in the areas of land use, housing, economic development, energy, transportation, water quality, and more.

RPC Directors and senior staff are asked to serve on many state councils and boards, including the Vermont Climate Council, and are often called upon by state agencies to develop and implement statutorily-mandated programs with our member municipalities.

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FY22
Update



**STATE OF VERMONT
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS**

Quick Facts



Vermont has **11** RPCs and **125** staff serving all of Vermont's municipalities.



155 towns received economic development assistance from their RPCs, strengthening their local economies.



RPCs around the state provided **187** towns with planning and bylaw assistance.



Visit VAPDA.org for more information about each RPC in VT



Regional Planning

At the regional level, RPCs coordinate town plans with regional plans, and provide key insights for communities through regional studies.



This region-wide perspective enables a broader understanding of the trends and regional dynamics that drive planning and investment decisions.

Windham Regional Planning Commission is going digital! WRC will be the first RPC to develop a digital regional plan that will be entirely web-based, with the goal of making the plan more engaging and useable by Vermonters.



Municipal Planning and Implementation

Regional Planning Commissions provided **187** municipalities with planning and bylaw assistance.

- Maintaining clear and up-to-date plans and bylaws creates a strong, guiding vision. This clear vision ensures smooth permitting, project implementation, and makes compact settlements possible.
- Equitable public engagement is key to the process of successfully updating plans and bylaws.



Rutland Regional Planning Commission worked with several towns to secure funding and lead planning studies for new municipal buildings, sand/salt sheds, stormwater/wastewater infrastructure, active transportation facilities, rail station upgrades, village center design, and more.



Housing

Regional Planning Commissions provided **187** municipalities with planning and bylaw assistance and are increasingly supporting infrastructure development to make new housing more affordable.

Many of these bylaw efforts support increased densities in our centers. More work is needed to balance the planning and zoning work with the permitting system, and to have the necessary infrastructure in place.



Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission worked with Evernorth and Champlain Housing Trust on the Building Homes Together campaign, setting a goal for Chittenden County of 1,000 homes per year with 250 of them being permanently affordable.

Economic and Community Development

155 communities received economic development assistance from their Regional Planning Commissions, strengthening local economies.

Strong local economies arise from comprehensive land-use planning and community development efforts. RPCs help build infrastructure and guide development patterns in order to provide the foundation and public support for private economic development.

Bennington County Regional Commission staff worked with the Southern Vermont Communications Union District to organize and develop a plan to connect unserved and underserved residents with fiber optic internet access through a partnership with Consolidated Communications.

Continuing efforts after the initial phase of the project have led to an award from the Vermont Community Broadband Board of \$9M in State funding to support the \$23.1M fiber network expansion.



FY22
Project
Feature



Cleaning Up Brownfields



55 communities were able to assess or remediate polluted land with the support of RPCs.

By assessing, remediating, and reinvesting in these properties with the help of RPCs, communities can achieve a variety of **benefits**:



INCREASE
LOCAL
TAX
BASES



EXPAND LOCAL
HOUSING AND
COMMERCIAL
PROPERTY STOCK



IMPROVE
PUBLIC
HEALTH



ENCOURAGE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



CREATE
JOBS



Mount Ascutney Regional Commission has been awarded a cleanup grant of \$3.5M through the U.S. EPA Brownfields Cleanup Program funded by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This represents a substantial portion of EPA's total \$4.8M Brownfields investment in Vermont.

Geographic Information System Services



181 communities received mapping services from Regional Planning Commissions, assisting in a variety of municipal operations and plans.

Mapping and data analysis is a key component to planning, enabling a deeper understanding of the various dimensions that RPCs assist communities in. Chances are the maps you see in a town office or road foreman's truck were created by an RPC.



RPCs provide GIS services to municipalities, state agencies, private entities and non-profits to support their projects, and ensure development and plans are driven by accurate data and sound analysis.



Partnerships

RPCs support numerous collaborative efforts.

- RPCs work with RDCs on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy & Economic Development Districts.
- RPCs provided initial start-up and some continuing support for Communication Union Districts.
- RPCs are serving as Clean Water Service Providers in the Lake Champlain basin.
- RPCs also support other collaboratives around public safety, energy, and other issues as needed with our municipalities.
- RPCs are one of the few entities that stay engaged for the months and years it takes to move a project from concept to implementation. Towns rely on us for this continuity.

Addison County Regional Planning Commission provided the staff support to get the Addison County Communications Union District formed with 20 municipalities participating. It has now evolved into Maple Broadband and has partnered with Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom to obtain a \$9.1 million grant to expand fiber-optic broadband in Addison County.



FY22
Project
Feature



Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Resiliency

With technical assistance from RPCs, **258** municipalities were able to mitigate damage from disasters and improve their emergency preparedness.

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management. Through partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources, RPCs assist municipalities by:

- ✓ PROVIDING STAFF TO THE STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER
- ✓ SUPPORTING LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTORS
- ✓ ASSISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS
- ✓ UPDATING FLOODPLAIN AND RIVER CORRIDOR BYLAWS AND HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS REQUIRED BY FEMA
- ✓ ASSISTING MUNICIPALITIES DURING AND AFTER DISASTER EVENTS
- ✓ ...AND MORE

Energy Planning and Development

With assistance from RPCs, **103** communities developed comprehensive energy plans.

With a focus on sustainability and affordability, Vermont communities face significant roadblocks and opportunities in the clean energy transition. RPCs assist communities by helping develop comprehensive local and regional energy plans that integrate land use, transportation, natural resources, and energy project implementation.




FY22
Project
Feature


Northwest Regional Planning Commission staff and local volunteers organized a Window Dressers Community Build in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties providing 144 affordable insulating window inserts for 17 homes. Inserts were free to low-income households. Window Dressers is a New England based nonprofit that helps communities build highly affordable and effective window inserts using a volunteer driven, collective build model.



Water Quality Protection, Planning and Project Development

201 communities took steps to improve their water quality with assistance from RPCs.

Many of these improvements resulted from RPC assistance in the *Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid Program* through the Vermont Agency of Transportation.



The **Grants-in-Aid Program** provides funding for municipalities to construct Best Management Practices on municipal roads to implement the state Municipal Road General Permit. Last year, **230** municipalities signed up to participate in the program. This helps municipalities select eligible road segments, identify the Best Management Practices needed for each segment, and prepare project scoring reports ahead of construction.



Transportation Planning

RPCs provided **198** municipalities with technical assistance in transportation, including:



TRAFFIC
COUNTS



CULVERT
INVENTORIES



ROAD EROSION
INVENTORIES



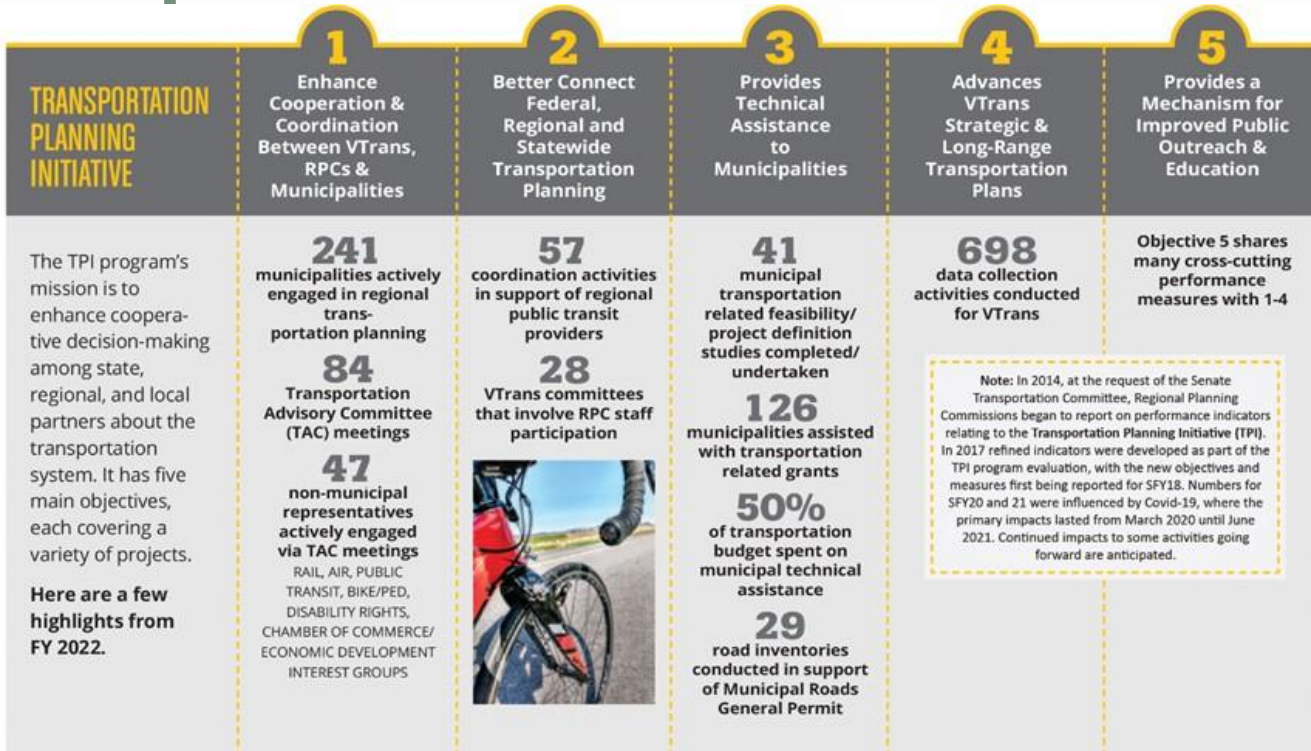
A VARIETY OF OTHER
SUPPORT SERVICES

RPCs help coordinate the **Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)**, a statewide initiative for public involvement in improvements to Vermont's transportation system and for the development of region-wide transportation plans.



Lamoille County Planning Commission worked with the Village of North Hyde Park to apply for the new VTrans Demonstration Project Program. The demonstration allowed the community to test safety improvements including proposed crosswalks and improved signage to make North Hyde Park a livable, vibrant community.

Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)



TPI has 5 main objectives:

- Enhance Cooperation Between VTrans, RPCs, and Municipalities
- Better Connect Federal, Regional, and Statewide Transportation Planning
- Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities
- Advance VTrans Strategic & Long-Range Transportation Plans
- Provide Platform for Improved Public Outreach

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Issues of Interest to RPCs

For Future Testimony

- Transportation Equity Framework
- Bike/Ped Project funding and permitting
- Rural Capacity – reduce rural local match requirements
- Relation to our downtowns and villages
 - Speed
 - Design
 - Livability and walkability
- Local/State Revenue – transit financing study



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For more information, visit:

 VAPDA.org