

**2014**

Vermont Local Roads Program

March 10, 2014

## **[ADDITIONAL TESTIMONY FOR THE VERMONT LEGISLATURE]**

The testimony contained in this document is in relation to the proposed language in Section 7 of the FY '15 Transportation Bill that would relocate the Vermont Local Roads Program from Saint Michael's College to the VTrans Training Center. This document is in response to testimony given regarding this issue from VTrans, and to share additional details regarding the Program's finances.

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Vermont Local Roads Program  
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Clarification of Opposition Statement:

In House Transportation documents, I have already submitted one written response to oppose the proposal by the Vermont Agency of Transportation seeking to absorb Vermont Local Roads into the Agency. Since then, I have heard testimony that some may be confused as to whether I am opposed or not opposed to this change.

I am not opposed to any well thought out process that will provide more and better services to local municipalities. By a well thought out process, I refer to a process that has an adequate discovery phase to first, understand what services towns currently receive and secondly, what services provide them the most value. Also, how do those services get delivered and how will we improve on that process through these proposed changes. In my professional opinion, the whole process would require more consideration than we can provide in this last minute introduction, with no formal inquiries preceding the proposal. I am opposed to a proposal based on efficiency but is submitted without a corresponding efficiency report. I also do not believe, according to my calculations, that any efficiency will be realized but that the opposite of efficiency will occur. I am opposed to a proposal that claims improved services but shows no signs of delivering any of those services currently or how those services will be delivered going forward. This proposal has been verbally submitted without corresponding documents or plans for carrying out the goals. What is now occurring is very unfortunate process where questions and answers are being developed on the fly without adequate time for proper research and consideration. I am very opposed to this unprofessional and inadequate effort by VTrans to address such an important asset for Vermont Towns.

I do and will support any proposal that wishes to achieve the best services we can provide to local municipalities. I would support changes that are well thought out, involve insights from all stakeholders and relevant agencies, and are properly evaluated by an independent committee. If VTrans was making a proposal to consider this move over a reasonable time frame and to start an intelligent discussion toward that end, I would be the first to agree to such a process. We have many resources such as the 58 LTAP/TTAP centers across the country, many partnering agencies that cater directly to towns, regional planning commissions, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and the towns themselves. I am sure towns will all agree that this decision is too important to adhere to the short time frame VTrans has allowed for this process to take place. I also do not see an urgent need to relocate immediately to reap the benefits of partnering. In fact, I believe that following the current schedule will result in a devastating loss of service to towns and effect many people adversely. VTrans will suffer less by following a reasonably managed process than any towns will by going along with the current proposal.

I will fully support any process to allow adequate study of the benefits or losses to municipal governments. I will also work with the Agency to identify any partnering opportunities that can benefit towns either immediately or in the long run. I would seek that all conclusions be properly reported to the Legislature and stakeholders at which time this proposal could be properly concluded. I would suggest that the contract with Saint Michael's be continued until adequate reporting concludes. I believe that over the course of one contract year, an independent committee should be able to conclude this study for proper consideration in the next legislative season. I am unopposed to such a fair process that carefully considers this very important decision.

Program Director, David Antone

From: David Antone, VLR Program Director

To: House Transportation Committee

Subject: Written Responses to prior testimony from VTrans officials concerning oversight of the VLR Director and stewardship of the Vermont Local Roads program, and proposed VTrans changes

**1) The question who is David Antone?**

I am a former municipal public works Department head with extensive education and experience in Business Management and Finance, Construction Project Management, Small Business ownership, and Adult Education in the technical field related to construction. I have provided Saint Michael's College and the VLR program with references from all previous employers.

**2) Who hired this guy and how come we weren't part of the interview process?**

I was hired by a team of Vermont Local Roads staff and the hiring process was set up by Saint Michael's College Human Resource department. VTrans was invited to be on the interview team but chose to decline the offer. The process involved interviewing many applicants until two finalists were chosen. Both applicants had very good skill sets for the job, but I was the only applicant with extensive experience in adult education related to transportation topics.

**3) Does he even have a boss? Who's his boss? I find this troubling.**

My Program Manager is Sue Scribner of VTrans. I do not make any major decisions to alter operations, add equipment, or seek other funding, without her express approval. We have a contract that is signed annually with VTrans which includes our annual work plan. The work plan has to be approved by FHWA to assure all of our objectives are serving local municipalities. The funding cannot be used for other purposes due to Federal Law. Our work plan is very specific and provides detailed objectives for each year. Chris Jolly of the FHWA office approves the work plan and VTrans (Sue Scribner) manages the program. Our program communicates frequently with the program manager's office and we have records of every communication. A quick review of communications would be proof positive that we do not operate without adequate scrutiny.

In addition to our VTrans program manager, we have several points of management at Saint Michael's College as VLR staff members are all Saint Michael's Employees. The Vice President of Finance, Neal Robinson, is my supervisor who approves my salary and monthly time reports. As a department head at Saint Michael's, I must follow all college policies. We rely on human resources for employee hiring and assessment. The contracts division provides review and approval of all of our outside contracts. The senior accountant has overseen and provided services for our contract for many years and provides our office with immediate answers to finance and purchasing questions. While VTrans only questions purchases over \$1000, this senior accountant questions items regardless of cost.

Internally, all of us (VLR staff) publish and share our complete calendar including time off and private appointments. All payrolls submitted for the Director and staff is posted on a shared drive where all employees and Saint Michael's Managers can view it at any time. All requests for expense reimbursements must be reviewed and signed by another staff member before being submitted for payment. These internal controls were instituted by David Antone in his first month as Director.

David Antone

Response to VTrans testimony Continued:

**4) Advisory/oversight board-Why doesn't this program have some type of board to provide oversight and advice like other not profits? (we are not a not-profit but we are employees of Saint Michaels College)**

This is the same question that I asked when I became director in July of 2011. Why don't we at least have an Advisory Board? There were some obstacles for me to overcome such as my lack of familiarity with partner organizations and our programs lack of knowledge on how other LTAPs accomplished this goal. I assigned a staff member the research task in August of that first year. Of course, Irene happened within weeks and the task was sidelined for an entire year but taken up again in September of 2012. Research of other LTAPS was completed and a discussion took place with our FHWA representative and our program manager at VTrans. Several suggestions were taken into account and our objective of formally installing a board in the current contract year was added to our work plan. The selection of members from towns is somewhat complicated because of the number of towns involved. We are currently scheduled to hold our third in a series of rolling advisory sessions made up of public works/ road supervisors and Regional Planning staff. After the third session we will select and interview candidates for the Advisory Board. Other candidates will come from partner agencies including VTrans. The goal is to complete the selection process in this contract year. As stated above, this is on record in our work plan and annual meeting of March 2013. It is not our desire to operate without a board.

**5) On the question of rent, Chris Cole has testified that for many years the VLR program resided at Saint Michael's with no rent charge but VTrans became aware that this process was changed recently and now were paying 80,000 in rent each year. VTrans believes eliminating this rent charge and other administrative cost in the program will create savings.**

I am not sure what Chris Cole was referring to when drawing attention to a change that occurred in recent years. Our Saint Michael's accounting staff has tracked the annual contracts back to 1996 and found no changes in process have occurred. There has never been a rent charge and continues to be no charge for rent in the current formula. The only building charges incorporated in the SMC fee is actual building services, and repair which makes up a small part of the annual charges. It is the same scenario as owning the property free and clear but paying for upkeep. In addition to paying actual building service cost, there is a number of staff professional services charged to the program through the percentage of salary formula. Our Vermont Local Roads staff spends very little time on administrative services that are not directly related to producing technical assistance or workshops. Saint Michael's college performs 95% or our programs administrative services. Within our submitted documents, you will find a summary for contract charges from 1996 to present indicating that all contract charge have been for the cost of performing administrative and facility services. And, it is important to note that the cost has gone down from 70% of salaries in 1996 to 55% in 2014. It is important to note that the VTrans training center is currently carrying an administrative charge per course delivered that is twice the administrative charge of Vermont Local Roads. If we agree to the change being requested, the cost will rise by approximately \$175,000 in additional salaries and benefits with no explanation of how the operations will be better for towns.

**6) VTrans has stated that the local roads program is primarily administrative and no one on the staff possesses any technical expertise for technical assistance or classroom instruction.** Their grossly inaccurate account depicts us as a hospitality group providing no more than a seat, food, and material handouts. "They have zero technical capability on their staff," is what I heard in Chris Cole's testimony.

This statement is indicative of how little forethought they have put into this major decision regarding the Local Roads program. David Antone has over thirty five years of construction experience working on large infrastructure projects in Vermont and New York. David comes from a family who started in transportation related construction in 1944 and his son is the third generation currently working out of Swanton, VT as municipal and private infrastructure contractor. David himself has owned two construction firms and worked in multiple positions for major contractors in our state. Most of his career was as a supervisor or project manager. David has been an educator since 1991 when he started teaching for the Essex Center for Technology. David has taught courses for VT Technical College, VT Dept. of

Employment and Training, Northern New England Trades Women, UVM extension service, National Counsel on Construction Education and Research, and Vermont Local Roads. David provides the broad type of technical experience to towns that VTrans has stated is what is needed in towns. David is experienced in administrative processes that towns need at the staff and management level and has expert knowledge and experience to share with field personnel. David does many workshops on the annual core schedule and, in addition, provides any custom training towns wish to have for their staff. David's broad expert technical and high level management experience allows him to effectively teach a broad range of subjects.

Erik Wells has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from UVM and a Bachelor's Degree from Saint Michael's College. He provides IT training to towns and provides training and assistance in management processes for towns. He is capable of providing free support to towns on computers and iPads. He also works closely with regional planners to supply many road foremen group subjects related to recordkeeping, road management software, inventory management and other specific management applications that will assist towns with streamlining their workloads. Erik provides on demand custom trainings that are all provided free of charge. He has set up many regular links with towns providing ongoing assistance.

David and Erik work as team to assure that services are sustainable and effective.

**7) VTrans has testified that VLR provides only entry level training and that this training is not as significant as the upper level training they will provide. The "sweeter training", as Chris Cole has described it, will be something towns will appreciate more than the entry level training which is all the VLR can provide.**

This statement does not coincide with sentiments of Vermont towns, the nationwide LTAP/TTAP program (58 centers), or the numerous evaluations and direct feedback received from our participants. VTrans officials are touting a higher level of training as an added benefit to towns. When the training center does develop a higher level of training that will appeal to towns, we will agree with this statement. Right now, we are seeing offerings from VTrans that our program has discarded because we couldn't get towns to participate. These VTrans offerings are courses that mirror curriculum from our previous "Management Academy" which have now been replaced with series of new courses derived from collaboration with town administrators, Selectboards and road supervisors. We see that the current offerings on the VTTC website are the same offerings that we have recently discontinued due to constituent feedback. I have submitted a letter from Road Foreman Stu Johnson that does a good job of summarizing the kind feedback driving our decision (see letter submitted). The new course offerings have been developed through direct collaboration with town administrators and staff members who are happy to testify. Providing the right offerings to towns requires that outreach and feedback be an important part of the process. There is no evidence here that VTrans has included a discovery process in their current proposal wishing to replace a system that is currently working well. At Vermont Local Roads, higher level trainings are not only available to towns but they are customized to meet their learning ability and desired objectives. As for entry level training, VLR does this on an ongoing basis to assure towns fulfill their OSHA safety requirements with training needed for new employees and the provision of having more experienced staff receive refresher training on a regular basis. These awareness trainings are generally attended by supervisors and staff members alike and quickly filled when offered.

**Note: Higher level of training is a relevant term and only qualifies as better training if it meets the needs of the audience. VTrans has made what I consider to be a careless statement, that towns and VTrans employees require the same training as they all do the same work. They say, there is no difference and their in house staff will be the best trainers for towns.**

I have to believe that many factors are being overlooked for this to be subscribed to as good guidance toward the goal of providing better training for towns. The cumulative group that we refer to as towns own and maintain the majority of gravel roads in Vermont. VTrans maintenance staff deals primarily with blacktop roads. Two or three towns in Vermont will have used more winter sand treating gravel roads than the entire Agency of Transportation does on an annual basis for all roads gravel and asphalt. It's likely that the same two or three towns do more road grading in one month than a

VTrans employee will do in several years, if at all. The request for grader training dominates our incoming request for equipment training. By having an experienced grader operator on staff and partnerships with volunteer towns, we are able to provide free quality training on request. We don't see this very important offering in the current proposal from VTrans.

While gravel roads dominate summer request for training and customized assistance, it also means winter maintenance instruction has to be delivered in two levels with one level dedicated to gravel road materials and techniques. This special course is on our fall schedule but there is no indication that VTrans considered or has the expertise to teach such a course. Our center has received much critical feedback about VLR using transportation agencies to teach winter maintenance based on liquid deicing and high salt use when they (the towns) are dominated by gravel road networks.

Towns have frequently asked us to involve their Selectboards in training and we have responded by offering custom trainings in towns the Selectboard members can easily attend. We again, do not see the VTTC training methods or schedules stepping in to fill this void. Selectboards and highway departments that are brought closer together by targeted training can work more collaboratively to improve their roads

Much of what I describe are the things pointed out by Stu Johnson in his letter to our program. His words in parallel with words of many other constituents have not gone unheard. Unfortunately, the Agency of Transportation has not done the proper study to share in the knowledge held by our LTAP and the 57 others across the country. In the current process, they seem also to have left out any need on their part to hear what towns think of the current VTTC trainings.

## VLRP MANAGEMENT ACADEMY ASSESSMENT

I was very disappointed to hear that the 2007 session was cancelled for lack of participants. I strongly encouraged some of my peers to consider attending and was equally disappointed they chose not to. Here are a few thoughts I have and some that I've heard in my discussions with others.

First and foremost was the concern over being able to take the time on the day of the class. Many of the towns around here are operating with only two people, if one of them leaves; the other is limited as to what they can do. This can be overcome by cooperating with neighboring towns, etc., but it is an issue.

Running a close second was the lack of support by the Select Boards or in some cases, an unwillingness to ask for it. Some of these towns don't really want a manager, they want a doer and they'll manage things. This works well depending on the personalities involved. I believe it takes a person who wants to learn and be inspired by new or different ideas, that has the support of the board to benefit from this program. I don't believe there's a large population in the municipal road game especially in the small town departments in that situation.

So the challenges as I see them are to inspire the road folks to take the course and what I feel is the real biggy.....Educate the Select Board members. Now my rant.....

Many of the things we learn and hear and see at these different learning opportunities needs to be experienced by the Select Board members. There's a lot more to this job than many of them realize. This is why getting them to ride shotgun in a plow truck during 'a good one' is invaluable. While they're always invited to participate in the workshops and seminars, precious few do and it seems, somehow that needs to be promoted and addressed. There was talk of a program being developed here in Addison County with grant money, for the Select Board members. The evening thing might help and limiting travel time is important. These folks are basically volunteers and many don't have the time or the inclination to put in a whole lot more time than they do. I've wondered if some kind of basic handbook could be developed that would hit the basics but leave the impression that there's a lot more to learn and VLRP is providing those opportunities. Emphasizing the issue of finding competent replacement help will be important as well.

Back to the Management Academy issue, I thoroughly enjoyed the entire experience. There were, however, many times when I could not see how I was going to apply what I was learning to this department's operation. Some of the topics were extremely interesting, but not as well suited to the foremen of small department's. While we took the information back and made the appropriate people aware of the issues, we were only educated messengers, Ancient Roads as an example.

I suspect setting a program up more like the scholar programs would be more popular with the foremen. The project and some of the speaking aspects wouldn't work but many of the other topics would and perhaps some others more pertinent to managing a small department could be developed. Ideas might include: the discussions about budget re: recent list-serve questions; spec's and bid process; dare I say some overview of computers, programs, protocol and other advantages I'm still searching for.

I've shot my mouth off enough here, but if you want to hear more, I'd be willing to help any way I can. You folks do provide a valuable service and I appreciate it.

Stu Johnson

## VTrans Training Center and Vermont Local Roads Administrative Cost Comparison

Note: VTrans salary information is gathered from the Vermont Transparency website and benefit information is an average from the Vermont Human Resources website. To date VTrans has been unable to supply this administrative cost data to the House Transportation hearings. Without this data for VTTC or the proposed LTAP program, the VTTC information included below was estimated by Vermont Local Roads.

**Salary and benefits raw cost comparison:** This compares two current managers and one staff person at VTTC with two current managers and one staff at Vermont Local Roads. **Each represents a full-time staff equivalent of three people.**

	VTTC	Vermont Local Roads
Combined salaries for 3 positions	\$198,495*	\$167,000**
Benefits (30% for VTTC; 28% for VLR)	\$59,548	\$46,760
<b>Total salary &amp; benefits</b>	<b>\$258,043</b>	<b>\$213,760</b>

\*Includes Program Manager Kari Miner, Safety and Health Manager Rob Gentle, and Financial/Scheduling Coordinator Joann Fleurrey.

\*\*Includes Director David Antone, Program Manager Erik Wells, Workshop Coordinator Michele Peoples, Research/Workshop Assistant Liam Kirby, and Publications Coordinator Kelsi Brett.

**Support services comparison:** This compares the cost for support services at VTTC vs. Vermont Local Roads.

	VTTC	Vermont Local Roads
<b>Cost for support services</b>	<b>\$258,774*</b>	<b>\$91,850**</b>

\*Includes salary & benefits for support services from other VTTC staff members not included in the above comparison figures, including Logistics Manager Tom Trahant, Employee Development Manager Kim Persons, and IT Support, Web, and Contracts Mary Borland at total combined salaries of \$199,057 plus benefits at 30% or \$59,717.

\*\*Total facility & administration charges from our employer, Saint Michael's College which includes all support services including human resources, contract management, discounted purchasing, accounting services including cash disbursements, payroll, IT equipment including software and printers, IT support and training, including file backup, website and list serve hosting and support, building space\*\*\*, utilities, maintenance, repairs, and renovations, whether they are planned by the college or requested by Vermont Local Roads.

\*\*\*Saint Michael's College increased the building space provided to Vermont Local Roads from 400 square feet to 1,500 square feet at no charge.

**Total overhead costs and cost per workshop:** Total overhead costs include salary, benefits and support services (and building space, utilities, maintenance, repairs and renovations for Vermont Local Roads); the overhead cost for producing workshops in 2014 (80 for VTTC based off their September, 2013 to June, 2014 website listings; 97 for VLR with 72 statewide, 15 custom and 10 road foremen)

	VTTC not including building	VLR including building
Total overhead costs	\$516,817	\$305,610
Total workshops in 12-months (antcp.)	80	97
Overhead cost per workshop	\$6,460	\$3,150*

\*The # of 2014 workshops is a conservative estimate by Vermont Local Roads and does not include additional FHWA webinars and RPC trainings. The overhead cost per unit of service could be further reduced by other services we provide including print newsletter, weekly electronic newsletter, custom publications, service requests involving document transfer, field assists yielding reports/trainings, web downloads, list serve transfers and updates and our directory of municipal officials.

Saint Michael's College  
 Summary of F&A recovery from Vermont Local Roads

Year	wages	F&A rate	F&A
96/97	95,004	70.00%	66,502
97/98	108,423	72.00%	78,065
98/99	117,042	72.00%	84,270
99/00	121,958	54.80%	66,833
00/01	131,600	54.80%	72,117
01/02	148,155	54.80%	81,189
02/03	158,358	54.80%	86,780
03/04	125,412	59.60%	74,746
04/05	148,143	49.60%	73,479
05/06	172,872	49.60%	85,745
06/07	166,646	49.60%	82,656
07/08	155,402	50.30%	78,167
08/09	158,852	52.80%	83,873
09/10	151,594	52.80%	80,042
10/11	169,394	52.80%	89,440
11/12	150,603	52.80%	79,518
12/13	155,214	52.80%	81,953

F&A (facilities and administration) rates are negotiated with our cognizent agency DHHS on a periodic basis, usually every 3 or 4 years.

Our rate uses a salaries and wages base.

F&A was charged in full for years 96/97-03/04

For years 04/05 to present, our negotiated rate has been discounted to VLR by 10%

F&A covers facilities expenses such as space, utilities, maintenance, custodial, insurance, taxes etc.

Administration includes such things as IT services, contract management, financial management, external audit

Human Resources including payroll and benefits administration, purchasing, accounts payable etc.

3/10/2014

To: House Committee on Transportation

From: Erik Wells, Program Manager, Vermont Local Roads Program

Dear Members of the House Committee on Transportation:

I would like the record to show that as Program Manager and the longest current tenured staff member at the Vermont Local Roads Program (4 years, 2 months) I oppose the language in Section 7 of the 2014 Transportation Bill that would move the Program from Saint Michael's College to the VTrans Training Center (VTTC) in the upcoming fiscal year 2015.

I have a great deal of respect for the individuals who work for the Agency of Transportation from operations personnel to senior management. The work they do each day is vital to our great state. In my opinion, there has not been adequate discussion among all vested parties to decide if housing the Vermont Local Roads Program within the VTTC is in the best interest of towns. A number of towns have submitted testimony to the Committee stating this same concern. It is my hope that the Committee will decide that this provision needs further research and discussion and amend Section Seven of the Transportation Bill. I think the best approach in this process would be a commissioned study to examine the pros and cons of a move before one is put into statute.

It is evident to me that the Agency does not completely understand how the Program works on a day-to-day operations level or the processes followed by the Program to fulfill its mission. An honest and thorough series of conversations with the Agency are necessary. Only after doing so would it make sense to propose major changes to the Program. Mr. Cole reached out to our Program after Section 7 was added to the Transportation Bill to "facilitate a transition." I believe having such a meeting would be premature while the bill is still being debated. In my opinion, it would have been better to approach the Legislature with a well-thought out proposal, rather than have this body do the work that should have taken place between the Program and the Agency prior to the Legislative session. Our program was unaware that this Program change was a possibility until being notified on February 19, 2014.

I want to thank the Committee for taking additional time and testimony to debate this important aspect of the Transportation Bill. I am available to testify before the Committee if it has any questions.

Sincerely,

-Erik Wells

Response to Testimony Provided from the Agency to Date:  
From: Erik Wells, VLR Program Manager

In my role as Program Manager I serve as the operations administrator to ensure all training and town assistance requests are fulfilled, and manage all center outreach and communications. In addition I work to facilitate and expand the program's partnership networks and evaluate services. I provide research assistance in the areas of transportation policy and regulation implementation, and I assist towns to integrate technology in order to improve administrative processes. I work with the Program Director to plot our objectives using feedback from partners and stakeholders at the local, state and national levels.

It was stated in testimony on February 26, 2014 by the Agency that, "Local Roads is just the administrative conduit to rent a hall, provide some food for the people to eat at lunch time, and clean-up afterwards. There's no technical knowledge that they're delivering." This summation devalues and diminishes the hard work by our current staff and everyone who has been employed by this Program in its 31 year history. I work with the Program Director, who has an extensive background in construction management and public works administration, to analyze needs communicated to us by towns that we serve and organizational partners to develop our strategic workplan for the budget year. The Program knows the stakeholders it serves, and has built an extensive trusting rapport with them. In designing and developing a training workshop, the Program Director and I meet with potential contract instructors or representatives from partnering organizations that would serve as teachers, to discuss in detail a training summary and the major objectives to accomplish. We use our collective technical knowledge of the transportation industry and knowledge of the client-base served to design a training course that makes sense. Most times, a walkthrough is a follow-up to this original meeting once the instructor has had time to develop a preliminary training plan and approach. In cases like the Rivers & Roads training we will deliver this year, these layers of scrutiny are not necessary since VTrans and ANR have already vetted the course. The Program Director also develops and teaches training workshops using his industry knowledge directly. I use my background in administration to provide research assistance to towns, and provide hands-on training to implement new technology systems into their public works departments. I think it's important to examine and unpack the term "technical" in the context of the Program. From my experience "technical" does not always mean reading blueprints and designing structures. It is about providing outside assistance to reach an objective the agent (town) cannot achieve using its current internal capacity in its closed system. *For a more detailed summary addressing how workshop training is delivered logistically, please consult the accompanying document.*

The following points are questions I have regarding this proposed move. I would like to advocate they are discussed in detail in a commissioned study to evaluate this proposal:

- In opposition to testimony provided by the Agency, there is minimal overlap between VTTC and Vermont Local Roads' current and intended trainings. Our staff conducted an analysis of the current 66 courses listed in the VTTC curriculum (as posted on its website) and found 9 subject-matter iterations that we currently offer. These 8 courses have some content overlap with what we offer, but our workshops have different nuances to address municipal level concerns. Beyond that, there are 6 additional

courses all within the safety and health area of the VTTC that we would consider offering to towns. All of these topics have or could be delivered by our program for free utilizing our alliance with VOSHA. *These are noted in the accompanying document.*

- A number of the courses offered in the employee development area within the VTTC are designed to address customer service, a major Agency objective as stated by Mr. Cole in testimony on February 26, 2014. Through prior course offerings and participant feedback, the desire and demand for this direct soft skill training at the municipal level is minimal. It is our programmatic opinion that they are better served as accompanying facets within a context-driven discussion. For example, designing and managing an operations policy for dealing with mailboxes that have been hit by a snow plow, and then the public relations side of implementing that policy.
- The employee development courses that address the Agency's policies on employee conduct issues like harassment or discrimination are important concepts to cover. We would prefer that they are handled at the municipal level internally to discuss its own policies and requirements, or that towns consult with the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) for assistance regarding policy implementation and/or design. These are town-wide policies beyond just the transportation department.
- In my opinion, the argument stated in testimony moving the Program under the roof of the VTTC as a means to create efficiency for classes taken by both VTrans and municipal employees would create the opposite effect. The minimal relevant course overlap would create the need to offer the more targeted municipal classes we already offer in our design. Class offering expansion sought with this move (i.e. safety training) is already being achieved at a minimal administrative cost and no cost to attendees working with VOSHA.
- The target audience for Vermont Local Roads' training is beyond public works decision makers and employees. Our workshops' target audience includes Selectboard Members and Town Administrators, with some workshop content developed specifically for these parties.
- The staff design and administrative structure I have heard through testimony would be a fundamental shift from the current design that functions very well, and add additional cost to the salary dollars utilized to deliver the Program services. In my opinion, it would be a challenge to replicate the current level of service supplied to municipalities.
  - The current design has 5 employees, 2 full-time and 3 part-time. This is the equivalent of 3 full-time employees. The positions held are: Director, Program Manager, Workshop Coordinator, Communications Assistant and General Assistant.
  - The proposed design is comprised of 3 employees holding the positions of Administrator, Trainer and Technical Assistant from what I have heard. In addition, the program would fall under the purview of the VTTC Program Manager. This position would then potentially be responsible for the design and delivery of training for VTrans Employees and Town Employees. The work of the Workshop Coordinator, Communications Assistant and General Assistant does not lend itself well to one Administrative position that would also need to handle

aspects of the current Program Manager job I hold. Additional support staff resources would be needed utilizing VTTC staff members in order to maintain and improve upon our current level of service.

- The Program currently employs College students in the positions of Communications Assistant and General Assistant. The Saint Michael's College Media Studies, Journalism & Digital Arts Department has been an asset in filling the Communications Assistant position. Both positions provide extensive work experience for college students.
- The Agency has been very clear that the current level of service will be met and exceeded by this move, and with this arrangement of human resources I am unsure if this can be accomplished. As noted on its website, the VTTC currently offers approximately 80 workshops a year. With Vermont Local Roads' current level of service (approximately 100 training workshops a year) this would more than double the administrative tasks regarding workshop management for VTTC support staff. These administrative tasks are currently handled by services provided by Saint Michael's College (for example accounting and purchasing) along with our current program staff design structure.
- Our Program uses an Access Database system to manage class registrants and attendance records. I am unsure what the VTTC uses and if these systems would need to be combined into one package for ease of use.
- Our payments to Saint Michael's College are not and never have been for rent. *Please consult the financial documents we have provided for an explanation.* In my opinion, the cost to be at the College is very reasonable.
- Dozens of towns have expressed concern regarding this proposed move of the program and have called for further discussion to take place. I would advocate for public meetings to take place throughout Vermont so towns can have a platform to address this during a research study.
- Our technical assistance and custom training meets the needs expressed to us by towns. We are able to quickly address concerns. Engineering services and expertise are not needed for the role we play for towns. Assistance focuses on administrative and management tools and plans. *Please consult the accompanying document from David Antone that goes into greater detail regarding technical assistance and custom training.*
- Municipalities value the independence and third-party position of the Program.
- As a department of Saint Michael's College, the contracting process for our Program has a very quick turnaround. We utilize the College's professional services contract and include the scope of work and teaching terms and locations for each hired instructor. We do not need to seek additional administrative layers of approval to execute a teaching contract agreement. It is a very fast moving and fluid process. I do not foresee this being replicated as a part of VTrans.
- The Program's website and social media sites receive frequent updates. In addition, we publish and distribute a weekly email newsletter. I am concerned our web presence will not have the depth of content and quick edit capability if under the purview of the Agency.

- We utilize an email listserv system as a service available to us as part of the College. We have expanded membership in this service to include over 160 towns. This is a great resource for members to crowd source answers to questions they have from their peers. A network of experts and experiences has been created for Towns to share among towns. I am concerned this service would go away under VTrans.
- As a contract grant service with the College, our funds are secured for the fiscal year. I am concerned program funding from the Agency could be reallocated during the budget year if a gap needs to be closed in another division within the Agency.
- In testimony the Agency stated that it has had many internal discussions regarding this potential move of the Program. I am concerned that David Antone and I were not notified regarding these discussions and this proposal until it was moved to be debated by the House Transportation Committee. We have the most knowledge regarding the Program's objectives and operations and having all parties in the room would have made this a much smoother and transparent process. We have not been provided any official documentation or explanation regarding the proposed move from the Agency, I have only been able to put the details together through testimony provided.
- David Antone is very qualified to lead the Program, and has brought a technical background in construction and public works administration not held by anyone else who has ever worked for the Program. I have been with the Program before Dave was hired and through the transition process and he has done an excellent job from a leadership position in revitalizing and energizing all aspects of the Program. We have received a great deal of positive feedback from organizational partners and the municipalities we serve.

I would also like to clear up a misconception regarding the non-profit status of the Program that has been stated in testimony. Vermont Local Roads is not an autonomous non-profit organization in the eyes of the IRS. Saint Michael's College is part of a group exemption through the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops. Each year the IRS updates the group ruling letter and any entities listed in the Official Catholic Directory are covered under the group ruling. Vermont Local Roads is a department of the College and the College is listed in the Official Catholic Directory. The Program is a non-profit organization that works toward a mission rather than to turn a profit, and operates through granted funds from the public sector. The Program is not governed by organizational bylaws or processes. It is a Department of Saint Michael's College through the contract agreement with VTrans.

Sincerely,

Erik Wells

### **VLR & VTTC Potential Course Overlap**

This analysis was done by VLR staff after consulted the course listing available on the VTTC website as of March 4, 2014.

Courses Currently Offered by VTTC that are similar to VLR Offerings

- Advancing Toward Supervision
- Global Harmonized Systems (GHS)
- Incident Command System (ICS)
- Snow & Ice Control
- Chainsaw (taught by Woodlands Training)
- Confined Space (taught by VOSHA)
- Hand & Power Tools
- Hazardous Materials
- Stormwater run-off

Courses offered by VTTC that VLR would consider offering (all are safety specific):

- Meth Lab Awareness
- Flagger- Train the Trainer (currently we certify flaggers)
- Trenching & Shoring
- Securing & Transporting Loads
- Fall Protection
- Electrical Safety

## **Vermont Local Roads General Workshop Planning Process for Calendar Year**

Submitted as Testimony to Vermont Legislature, 3/10/2014

By Erik Wells, VT Local Roads Program Manager

*General workshops are program offerings that are widely advertised and held in multiple locations throughout Vermont.*

*Our objective is to hold general workshops taking into consideration subject and location so access to attend is within less than an hour's drive.*

Workshops are held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. These are the best days to hold training from participant feedback. The majority last 4 hours from 8am to noon. Many highway departments use 4-day work weeks after the winter season (Monday-Thursday). Workshop monthly quantity varies throughout the year (see below). Wednesday is our target "training day" to hold a class most of the year.

Workshop topics to hold each month are decided upon by the Director and Program Manager. Programmatic resources and guidance is ascertained from: The workplan, partner outreach to organizational partners including Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and District Transportation Administrator (DTA) Offices and the Roads Scholar Program requirements. Many technical and safety topics for training delivery have come from RPCs, DTA Offices and through our alliance with VOSHA to relay current pressing needs for the towns they serve. For example, a need to hold Complete Streets training for towns was relayed to us from these partners.

The target is to hold each workshop in each of the 4 program location zones (ideally we add a 5<sup>th</sup> zone in the future). For a map breakdown of zones, please see Page 5 of this document. *Some workshops do not lend themselves to this 4 zone model due to subject matter or instructor availability.* Next, the Program Manager and Workshop Coordinator decide which days each month classes will be held (holidays and additional center commitments are consulted). In addition, the schedules of events being held by partners (for example Road Foremen Group meetings) are consulted to reduce conflicts. Training dates for the year are blocked off by the Workshop Coordinator and the instructors are then notified and dates confirmed in their schedules. This takes place by the end of February.

The workshop schedule is posted on the Program website. The training sites are scheduled quarterly by the Workshop Coordinator using the training days the instructors have been scheduled to teach. Site selection depends on the nature of the workshop, and using a variety of locations within a workshop zone (we don't want to go to the same place every time). Promotional flyers are then designed in house by support staff, printed and distributed using

postal mail or electronically via our email list and weekly newsletter. Registration begins once promotional flyers have been sent out (approx. 2,000 people are provided flyers). Timing is important because we need to have the flyers delivered to recipients 3-4 weeks before the first scheduled class that we are promoting. We also promote 2-3 workshop topics in each outreach mailing. Our master schedule for these general workshops helps dictate the day to day flow of our program operations.

The class locations have been readdressed in the past two years due to feedback from participants. This feedback has indicated that participants do not like being in classroom settings at a hotel or conference center, they prefer being in a garage or municipal community space. There is not adequate time to spend over an hour traveling to a training location participants have communicated to the Program, and networking with peers from neighboring towns is a valued asset. In addition, Selectboard Members expect training to be a little or no cost. Towns need equipment training at low or no cost and management training that considers the budget, personnel and objectives at the municipal level. For these reasons, our Program has sought out and engaged municipalities to provide training locations for access and cost reduction.

For all workshops using a hired instructor, the Workshop Coordinator puts together a contract for the services. This contract is a Saint Michael's College Professional Services Contract, the conditions and terms have been all approved by the College and our Program adds the specific details in relation to the workshop. To execute a contract Vermont Local Roads as a College Department can set forth the additional conditions. The Program Manager approves the contract and consults with the Director if needed. The time to set a contract in place is minimal, and in some instances a contract is signed and returned the same day it is sent. The Program Manager assists to develop the scope of work included in the contract. This is most prevalent when a new workshop topic is being delivered so there is a clear understanding between the Program and the contract instructor regarding the services being delivered. Many workshops require a walk-through meeting which takes place between Program Management and the instructor. This ensures the VLR Program is satisfied with the training that will be delivered. In some instances, a review committee will be formed to add additional layers of scrutiny and expertise to the workshop offering. For example, a review committee that included stakeholders from VTrans, AARP, VT Dept. of Health, Chittenden Co. Regional Planning Commission and Local Motion participated in a walk-through for the 2014 Complete Streets Workshop and provided the instructor important content feedback.

Once scheduled each class delivery is then managed by the Workshop Coordinator and support staff with oversight from the Program Manager. The Workshop Coordinator manages all registrations for classes, ensures enough handouts are prepped and packed, sets up catering

service, goes over logistics at each site (this can include building use agreements, AV equipment availability and making sure enough seating and tables are set up), prepares sign-in sheets, name tags and reviews Roads Scholar reports to flag if anyone attending the training will graduate to a new level of the program that day. Our Microsoft Access database system is the management tools for workshop delivery (registration, Roads Scholar Program record keeping and billing). The Workshop Coordinator keeps the Program Manager apprised of class sizes and any potential weather conflicts then may lead to a cancellation or postponement. The class target size is 30 participants for most classes (with a couple exceptions). If a class exceeds 30 registrants, additional sign-ups are placed on a waiting list. If the waitlist exceeds 10 people, an additional class is usually scheduled within that workshop delivery zone. To schedule an additional class, the instructor is consulted for availability, a date and location set, and a new contract with the additional work is sent. People on the waitlist are then notified of the additional class, and the added class is also promoted using the Program website, e-newsletter and social media.

After a workshop takes place, attendance is confirmed and entered into the database to give each attendee Roads Scholar credit. If there was a charge associated with the workshop, all attendees are then invoiced. As checks are received, they are batched and provided to the College Accounting Department to process. Each Selectboard Chair is notified regarding who in town attended a training and what was covered. Requests for payments covering instructor costs, catering invoices and space rental are made to the College Accounting Department. All of this work is performed by the Workshop Coordinator.

### **Scheduling Model for Class Quantity:**

**January to mid-March:** These are heavy winter operation months for municipal highway departments. The focus these months are classes geared toward public works managers, Selectboard members, municipal managers and additional vested stakeholders. This is done so highway employees tasked to plow snow do not have a conflict on a class day when a winter event takes place. This also benefits the program because cancelling classes due to weather is reduced due to the target audience during these months. Weekly quantity is kept low at 1-2 workshops per week.

**Mid-March to July:** Transition is made from winter operations to construction season prep and work for municipal highway departments. Outdoor class components can be utilized. The schedule quantity begins to build in late March, and hits a first half of the year peak in June

**July:** This is an intentional light month on the schedule due to staff vacations and the National LTAP Meeting. Some workshops are held and it can be used as an overflow for any added classes from the first half of the year. The Center Director provides instruction during this time.

**August-October:** This is another peak period for classes because construction is still being done and winter preparations are made. Outdoor class components are continued to be utilized.

**November-December:** This time of year sees a decrease of classes due to the onset of the winter season, the holidays and hunting season.

### **Partnerships Utilized for Class Delivery:**

- The Game of Logging Level I, II and Storm Damage clean-up is now being offered by our Program. We are the conduit to connect and schedule towns with Northeast Woodland Training. A needs assessment/promotion was sent out in late 2013 to gauge interest, and using that information 4 days were blocked off on our calendar to provide this training. There is a maximum of 10 participants in each class. These are being scheduled strategically so the interested personnel in towns can attend. Additional dates can be added as the needs arise. Our Program organizes the training, locations and registrations. This is a higher-level and more expensive offering, so the charge is set to just break-even with the instructor fees. Our Program is able to supplement some of the cost, and the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) offers a scholarship for member towns that could be utilized for this. VLCT used to schedule these classes, but will now look to our Program in partnership to fill that role.
- The Hannaford Career & Technical Center in Middlebury has partnered with our Program as part of its Transportation Academy. Director David Antone will instruct an OSHA and Highway Safety Awareness Course this Spring (12 hours total) as a prerequisite to a 32-hour, 2-week hands-on course on heavy equipment safety and operation offered this August. There will be spots reserved for Town employees in this course, and VLR will supplement a portion of the course fee for them.
- AARP Vermont partnered with our Program to deliver Complete Streets Courses in 2014. AARP provided a portion of funding to cover the operation expenses to hold the classes. These have been a tremendous success, and we are exploring an additional course to build off the first class to offer in 2015.
- Instruction partnerships are utilized through the Agency of Natural Resources for our Roads & Rivers, Environmental Series and Roads & Trees Workshops. An alliance with VOSHA enables us to use staff for safety instruction. All of these classes are offered at no charge to towns.
- Towns, Regional Planning Commission (RPC) and District Transportation Administrative (DTA) Offices have been utilized to expand the quantity of low or not cost host facilities for workshops, either by offering their space or suggesting good locations to utilize. This has assisted in the Program's ability to consistently offer classes in each of the four training zones. For example, our effort to bring more training into the Northeast

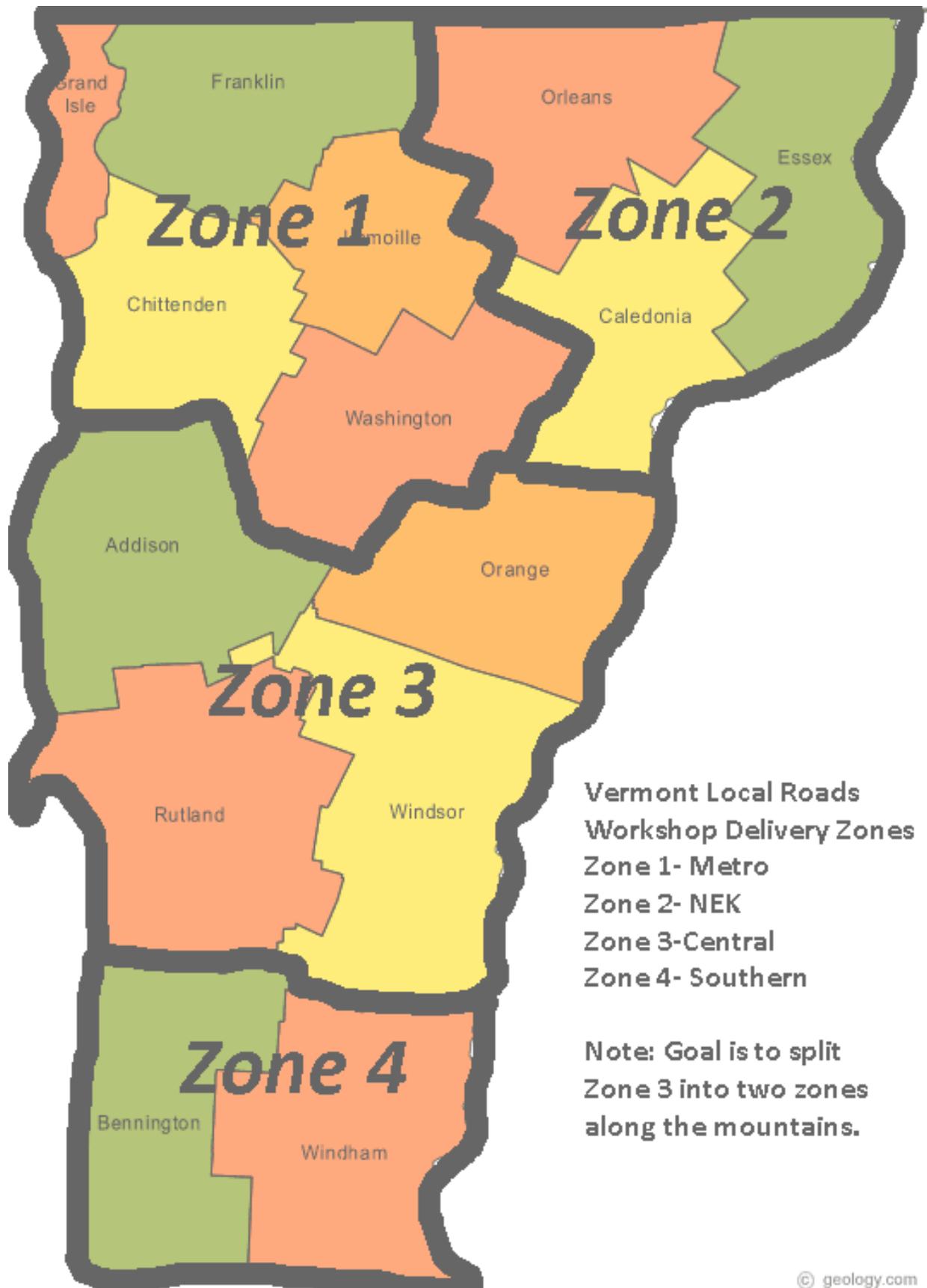
Kingdom was a result of feedback received from the RPC serving the region and Districts 7 & 9 Administrative staff. We learned that close access to training locations, especially in this region, is critical for participation.

- Vermont Technical College (VTC) Continuing Education is a new partnership that we are developing in 2014. The College is letting our program use classroom spaces in its four locations (Randolph, Williston, Brattleboro and Bennington) as an in-kind donation. We are exploring ways to use VTC for future instructors to go through a teaching learning program, and for our Program to design workshops eligible for continuing education credits.

### Roads Scholar Program:

The Roads Scholar Program is an hours-based training program for participants to advance in level (rubric below). This program is an education model and carries a strong sense of pride amongst those enrolled. The Program uses this rubric in assist in workshop scheduling. For example, more workshops are offered in the “technical category” because it requires the greatest number of participant hours for advancement. Our Program sets a schedule so an individual enrolled in the Roads Scholar Program can graduate in a reasonable amount of time. Note: Students can also receive Roads Scholar Credit for attendance at custom trainings, road foremen meeting training and training offer through different outlets (pending approval). A high number of supervisory classes are being offered in 2014 to make up for a low number offered in 2013 as a transition year. **1,679 people** are enrolled in the Roads Scholar Program.

Roads Scholar	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Masters
<u>Categories</u>	<u>Hours Required per Category for Each Level</u>			
Equipment	18	30	36	36
Environmental	6	6	12	12
Safety	6	12	18	18
Supervisory	0	6	12	12
Technical	30	42	48	48
Tailored to choice				49
<b>Cumulative Hours</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>175</b>



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The following individuals or Selectboards have submitted written or verbal testimony to the Committee and notified VLR that they were doing so. Testimony was emailed to Fran Cerulli or phone messages were left on the Committee Room answering machine. There may have been additional testimony submitted. Each piece of testimony supports the work of VLR and questions the process followed to date and this proposal. On the following pages are written documents that were submitted or CCed to VLR.

- Sara Tully, Mendon Town Administrator
- Bruce Hoar, Williston Public Works Director, VMHA
- Delsie Hoyt, West Fairlee Selectboard Chair
- Bill Gormley, Danby Road Commissioner & Selectboard Member
- Steve Barrett, Brattleboro Public Works Director
- The Town of Calais Selectboard
- The Town of Marlboro Selectboard
- Barbara Elliot, Huntington Town Administrator
- Brent Smith, Road Foreman, Town of Groton
- Rob Lewis, Northfield Town Manager
- Byron Hathaway, Rutland Town Road Commissioner
- Harry Hinrichsen, Barre Town Engineer, VMHA
- Bill Bryant, Bristol Town Administrator
- Katie Reilley, New Haven Public Works Dept.
- Cindi Jones, Warren Town Administrator
- Floyd Sheesley, Colchester Public Works Operations Manager
- Darlene Butler, Hubbardton Highway Department
- Town of Landgrove Selectboard
- Dustin Keelty, Milton Highway Supervisor
- Rick Jones, Village of Essex Jct. Road Foreman
- Adam Cate, City of South Burlington, Operations Manager
- Paul Goodrich, Shelburne, Highway Superintendent
- Steve Davenport, Westmore, Road Foreman
- David Walker, Vernon, Road Foreman
- Harry Dailey, Woodbury, Road Foreman
- Joe Blodgett, Corinth, Road Foreman
- Rob Gaiotti, Dorset, Town Manager & Jim Hewes, Road Foreman
- Ron Kelly, Poultney, Road Foreman
- The Town of Dummerston Selectboard

February 27, 2014

To: The House Transportation Committee

Dear Committee,

I am writing this letter in regards to the possibility of eliminating Vermont Local Roads. Although I think VTrans does a great job, no town road commissioner will ever get the one on one help and knowledge from this program.

My name is William Gormley and I am currently the road commissioner in the town of Danby. When I stepped into this position there were numerous on going problems that desperately needed to be addressed. I worked directly with Dave Antone with VLR and after numerous phone calls and visits a permanent solution was discussed, planned, and put into action. We now have very grateful residents.

The VLR also provides Roads Scholar Workshops and courses for town road crews. This is a great way for neighboring towns to meet and discuss challenges and solutions to everyday problems that arise. I myself have attended numerous classes and always leave with a better understanding of the topic.

Please take into consideration this valuable resource made readily available to small towns like mine, it would be a great loss.

Sincerely,

William Gormley

Danby, Vermont

Hello Ms. Cerulli –

I am writing to you as the House Transportation Committee’s assistant regarding the proposed bill before the Committee regarding the Local Technical Assistance Program – with the hopes that I can get some additional information on the impact this bill will have on training and support provided to local municipalities. I am particularly interested in the details (budget, program plans, timeframe, implementation strategy, etc.) for how this transition from Vermont Local Roads to a LTAP within VTrans would play out. I would appreciate any additional information you can provide besides the draft wording provided in Sec. 7 – Town Highway Vermont Local Roads; Local Technical Assistance Program (a) through (c).

I also wanted to share a bit with you and the Committee based on my role as Huntington Town Administrator. I was hired in May 2012 following the death of our previous Town Administrator. New to municipal government, I have worked closely with the Vermont Local Roads program staff to gain skills and knowledge to help me during a time of considerable transition. I have found the structured classes as well as the response to my calls & emails from VLR program staff to be excellent and timely. I am also aware that members of our Road Crew have participated in VLR training for up to 13 years. They have participated in the VLR Roads Scholar Program – and have great pride in the achievements and recognition that this program has provided. I believe the association with an accredited college lends tremendous credibility to the program. For some, this is the only continuing education they have had since dropping out of school. It is a credit to the staff of VLR that these guys have been willing to take the risk involved in attending classes. The Road Crew has worked hard to reach higher levels within the Scholar Program. And, it is a significant benefit to the Town that they are then bringing new ideas, techniques, best management practices, practical skills and safety practices back to their everyday work.

I am confident that the Committee will want to preserve this significant benefit to municipalities provided by the current Vermont Local Roads program staff and program structure in the event they decide to remove this program from the St. Michael’s College umbrella and transfer it to VTrans. To ensure that, I assume a detailed, upfront, collaborative planning process will be implemented before the bill leaves the Transportation Committee. I look forward to learning more from you about this planning process and the timeline being considered by the Committee as it moves forward in considering this transition.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Barbara Elliott

\*\*\*\*\*

*Barbara JM Elliott  
Huntington Town Administrator  
Phone: 802.434.4779*

Local members of the Transportation Committee,  
I have been made aware of a provision in the current transportation bill that would incorporate the current Local Roads program into the Vtrans training center. I am very concerned that such a move would degrade the level of service we at the municipal level would receive. As a stand alone program Vt Local Roads has been a very sensitive to local municipal needs program and has provided the needed training we desire. As an example, my involvement with our town highway department started in 1986 as a private contractor for winter plowing and salting. I did not receive any training. Salt use was by the seat of my pants. In 2000 I became road commissioner for our town. I became involved with local roads at that time and through workshops I attended I was able to reduce salt use in our town by half without reducing level of service. This has saved our town thousands of dollars. I can not overstate the importance of the training provided by the current Local Roads program. Please keep the program intact by not moving it into the hands of Vtrans. Thank you for your consideration of our needs.

Sincerely,  
Byron Hathaway  
Road Commissioner, Town of Rutland  
[rthighway@rutlandtown.com](mailto:rthighway@rutlandtown.com)  
802-353-0540

To the House Transportation Committee  
March 9, 2013

I would like to offer my opinion regarding the proposal to move the Vermont Local Roads program to a division within VTrans.

I am a selectman in the town of Calais and have been working hand-in-hand with the road commissioner for the past year and a half. I currently serve as the supervisor of the highway department, a job created by the selectboard to help manage our \$750,000 town highway budget. Recently, Calais residents played an active role in re-defining our town road standards, which has been a challenging process for both the road crew and the selectboard.

During this change with our town road crew, I often turned to David Antone for advice, information and an outside perspective on many issues. He was a supportive voice, brought reasoned information to the debate and offered individual service to the town of Calais. This is an invaluable service for my town and I have many more future needs from the Vermont Local Roads programs and its staff. I plan to attend more workshops with the road crew and have already scheduled individual training for Calais that David has offered, which will address issues unique to Calais.

I am concerned that by folding the current program into VTrans, some of that personal attention and an outside view of transportation issues will be lost. The independence of Vermont Local Roads is an important asset to the program, allowing an independent voice and outside perspective to town highway issues.

I urge you to maintain the most important part of Vermont Local Roads – its independence.

Toby Talbot  
[Toby\\_talbot@comcast.net](mailto:Toby_talbot@comcast.net)  
802-371-7592

To the House Transportation Committee,

As I'm sure you're all aware, the condition of the dirt roads in small, rural Vermont towns can be one of the most contentious issues facing select boards. In Marlboro, we decided to address this issue head-on and looked for an organization to guide and support our efforts. Fortunately, we selected the Local Roads program to assist us in determining how to proceed. Their input has been invaluable to us. David Antone has visited the town on a number of occasions, inspecting and photographing the condition of our dirt roads and creating a report on what he found. He attended select board meetings on a number of occasions and met with our road crew chief to discuss best practices with him. He assisted the town in obtaining a grant to more fully assess the condition of the roads and identify the main trouble areas; additionally, the assessment will provide proposals for dealing with those stretches. He has planned a grading workshop this spring for our grader operator, as well as operators from other local towns. By following Local Roads' analysis and advice, we feel that we will be able to improve the condition of our roads while at the same time potentially reducing costs.

Our feeling about the Local Roads Program is "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Our dealings with their organization have been first rate in every conceivable parameter. They are timely, organized, knowledgeable, informative and cordial. We don't know what will happen to the program if it moves to VTrans, but, with all due respect to VTrans, the Local Roads Program certainly can't get any better, as we feel it is as good as it could be.

Thank you for taking our testimony via e-mail.

Andy Reichsman  
authorized to represent the Marlboro Select Board

Hi Patti, Dick & Bob,

I felt the need to send a note on the possible changes to the Vermont Local Roads program through St. Michael's College.

Currently this program provides an extremely valuable resource to municipal highway departments in Vermont. The local roads programing provides vital training and information to our workforce in Dorset, at an extremely affordable level. I don't have an intimate knowledge of the local roads finances, but I'm confident that they provide a valuable service on very limited budget. State government does not have the ability to be as flexible and responsive as the current program staff.

The program administrators have a long track record of quality service and very good relationships with local municipalities. VTrans may feel they can provide comparable service for less dollars, but I feel this service is best provided by an independent third party. For these reasons I don't see a need to change the local roads program set up. Thanks for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Rob Gaiotti  
Dorset Town Manager

Jim Hewes  
Dorset Road Foreman

--

Rob Gaiotti  
Town Manager  
Dorset Town Offices  
112 Mad Tom Rd  
East Dorset, VT 05253

(p) 802-362-4571  
(f) 802-362-5156

<http://www.dorsetvt.org>

Dear Ms. Cerulli;

As Town Manager of the Town of Northfield, I find this proposal to create an LTAP within the Agency of Transportations Training Center very disconcerting. Why on earth is it necessary to eliminate a 30 plus year LTAP/TTAP, that has served the needs of local municipal Highway Departments successfully for over 30 years and incorporate it in a State Bureaucracy? Is it because VLR's program offerings have been so successful? What you folks in Montpelier don't seem understand is that Vermont Local Roads has built the trust and working relationships with Town's across Vermont through close collaboration in solving Highway issues and provided best practices training for our road crews. I notice too that the Members of this committee come from Towns and Cities in Vermont with the least number of "local roads"! I travel Route 12 from Route 2 in Montpelier to Northfield everyday and I see this road as an example of how ineffective State run organizations are. Lastly, I wonder why there has been such a short window on this matter and very little lead time to discuss these proposed changes? Kind'a reminds me of how well the Health Exchange has worked and now you want our Local Roads Program. Let's re-think this move now not later!

I don't mean to be rude. It just seems we are always trying to fix things that don't need fixing!

Regards,  
Rob Lewis, Town Manager  
Town of Northfield  
51 S. Main St., Northfield, VT. 05663  
802-485-6121

House Transportation Committee:

Dave and Ann,

I am contacting you to urge you not to pass the transportation bill as currently drafted. My opposition is directed at Section 7 Town Highway Vermont Local Roads; Technical Assistance Program. I support VTRANS providing more technical support to municipalities, but not at the expense of the currently structured Vermont Local Roads Program. I represent a small municipality in Rutland County and have 15 years of experience working closely with both VTRANS District 3 and also the Vermont Local Roads Program.

I had been asked by Jon Williams at the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to testify before the committee in support of making the Technical Assistance positions permanent with VTRANS. Unfortunately, my schedule has not allowed me the opportunity to do so. Current VTRANS Road and Bridge Codes and Standards as well as Agency of Natural Resource regulations require a greater level of technical expertise for most road projects and almost all culvert replacement projects. Based on hydraulic studies and ANR permits a simple 18" culvert replacement becomes a 5' X 8' cement box culvert with wingwalls escalating the cost from a \$5,000 project to a \$50,000 project. The project quickly escalates to beyond the technical expertise of the staff in small municipalities. Does the project require contracting an engineer? Most of the time, not. In most small municipalities, road commissioners are working road commissioners. They are out plowing roads and maintaining the town's infrastructure and they are great at what they do, but they are not structural engineers, nor should they be. In order to qualify for state grant programs, municipalities must keep current inventories on all roads, bridges and culverts. These inventories are then used a budgetary tools to create a capital improvement plan. The stumbling block for the small municipality is budgeting for the small 18" culvert replacement that the town expects to be a \$5,000 project. We could really use the technical assistance from VTRANS to help us appropriately budget for projects that meet all the state regulations. We could really use the assistance in creating Requests for Proposals (RFP's) to send to contractors in order to get bids back that compare apples to apples. This is how Mendon utilized the Technicians from VTRANS District 3 hired after Tropical Storm Irene. Hiring an engineer to help budget and create an RFP is complete overkill and an expense municipalities certainly can't afford. The Technicians could assist all towns in the district. Structural Engineers certainly have their place working on large projects that require engineering, not technical assistance.

On Monday, I learned that Section 7 took the Vermont Local Roads Program and renamed it the Local Technical Assistance Program. I strongly urge you NOT to eliminate the Vermont Local Roads Program without careful thought and coordination as to how all the services that Vermont Local Roads provides currently to municipalities can be maintained. Vermont Local Roads provides essential services municipalities. They are our "go to" organization to assist towns in all road related issues. I am a graduate of the 2010-2011 Vermont Local Roads Management Academy which included a series of seminars over a year and a half. Vermont Local Roads and their staff is extremely knowledgeable about the issues and challenges municipalities face on a daily basis. It may seem on the surface to be an appropriate move to

fold the Vermont Local Roads Program into VTRANS Training Center, but I firmly believe that it will do more harm than good for municipalities.

Again, I believe this move takes careful thought and consideration and based on the fact that Vermont Local Roads has not been consulted through the decision making process it is clear that the decision is being made too quickly.

I apologize for not being available to testify in front of the committee. I am available to answer any questions you have. I can be reached at the Town Office 802-775-1662 ext. 2 or based on hearing you may be voting this afternoon, my cell phone 802-236-1505.

Ann- Hopefully we will see you Monday night at the Mendon Town Meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

***Sara Tully***

Mendon Town Administrator

Town of Mendon

2282 US Route 4

Mendon, VT 05701

802-775-1662

[mendonadmin@comcast.net](mailto:mendonadmin@comcast.net)

[www.mendonvt.org](http://www.mendonvt.org)

**Sara Tully**  
**Town Administrator**  
**Town of Mendon,**  
**2282 US Route 4,**  
**Mendon, VT 05701**  
**802-775-1662**  
[mendonadmin@comcast.net](mailto:mendonadmin@comcast.net)

February 28, 2014

House Committee on Transportation

Testimony regarding FY '15 Transportation Bill as it relates to the Vermont Local Roads Program and the need for additional technical assistance to municipalities.

Mendon is a small town sandwiched between Rutland Town and Killington in Rutland County, population is just over 1,000 with 22 miles of maintained roads and a 2 man road crew assisted by a part time position when needed.

I have been the Town Administrator for 15 years and have worked closely with VTRANS District 3 and Vermont Local Roads. I can speak highly of both organizations and would say I have excellent working relationship with both of them.

I support the availability of additional technical assistance to municipalities, but not at the expense of the currently structured Vermont Local Roads Program.

Recently, I learned that Section 7 of the FY'15 Transportation Bill took the Vermont Local Roads Program and renamed it the Local Technical Assistance Program. I strongly urge you NOT to eliminate the Vermont Local Roads Program as it stands independently from VTRANS without careful forethought and coordination as to how all the services that Vermont Local Roads provides currently to municipalities can be maintained. Vermont Local Roads provides essential services municipalities. They are our "go to" organization to assist towns in all road related issues. Over the past decades, they have pin pointed exactly what municipalities need and have directed the educational seminars to meet those needs. I am a graduate of the 2010-2011 Vermont Local Roads Management Academy which included a series of 10 seminars over a year and a half culminating with an individualized Development Plan. Vermont Local Roads and their staff is extremely knowledgeable about the issues and challenges municipalities face on a daily basis. It may seem on the surface to be an appropriate move to fold the Vermont Local Roads Program into the VTRANS Training Center, but I firmly believe that it will do more harm than good for municipalities.

According to The Orange Book Section 9, "VTrans has the duty by statute to provide assistance and advice to municipalities (19 V.S.A. Section 10). The advice may be for small and routine issues, or it may extend to substantial issues involving public policy at the municipal level. VTrans will analyze the facts, statutes that apply, and general policy thinking before providing the requested advice. For other than very modest work, municipalities must reimburse VTrans for its costs (19 V.S.A. Section 10(5)). Sometimes VTrans may not be able to do the work with its employees. In these cases, municipalities may be referred to the private sector or VTrans may engage a private firm."

Municipalities need additional technical assistance for two reasons which has resulted from State Codes and Standards and Agency of Natural resource permitting requirements:

1. To appropriately prepare RFP's for mid-sized construction projects.
2. To help budget for projects based on road, bridge and culvert inventories.

Current VTRANS Road and Bridge Codes and Standards as well as Agency of Natural Resource regulations require a greater level of technical expertise for most road projects and almost all culvert replacement projects. Based on hydraulic studies and ANR permits a simple 18" culvert replacement becomes a 5' X 8' cement box culvert with wingwalls, escalating the cost from a \$5,000 project to a \$50,000 project. The project quickly escalates to beyond the technical expertise of the staff in small municipalities. However, not to the point that structural engineering services are required.

In most small municipalities, road commissioners are working road commissioners. They are out plowing roads and maintaining the town's infrastructure and they are great at what they do, but they are not structural engineers, nor should they be. In order to qualify for state grant programs, municipalities must keep current inventories on all roads, bridges and culverts. These inventories are then used as budgetary tools to create a capital improvement plan. The stumbling block for the small municipality is budgeting for the small 18" culvert replacement that the town expects to be a \$5,000 project when it becomes a \$50,000 project after regulatory review. We could really use the technical assistance to help us appropriately budget for projects that meet all the state regulations. We could really use the assistance in creating Requests for Proposals (RFP's) to send to contractors in order to get bids back that compare "apples to apples". This is how Mendon utilized the Technicians from VTRANS District 3 that were hired after Tropical Storm Irene. Hiring an engineer to help budget and create an RFP is complete overkill and an expense municipalities certainly can't afford. The Technicians could assist all towns in the district. Structural Engineers certainly have their place working on large projects that require engineering, not technical assistance.

I would suggest and support additional technical assistance be provided by VTRANS or the Vermont Local Roads Programs with additional funding for either organization.

Thank you for your time and consideration to my testimony regarding the FY'15 Transportation Bill as it relates to the Vermont Local Roads Program and the need for increased technical assistance to municipalities.

## Transportation Committee

I am concerned about this proposed change to the Local Roads Program. Why would the agency create a new LTAP program and add three new permanent classified positions when the current program works well? The money proposed for this change could be used by the current Local Roads Program to conduct workshops, seminars & classroom instruction. Local Highway Departments are concerned about this proposed change. Did the agency conduct public meeting to educate the local Highway departments about the proposed changes?

Steve Barrett, Director  
Brattleboro Public Works  
211 Fairground Road  
Brattleboro, Vermont  
Tel 802-254-4255

Hello, I would like more information regarding the proposed move of Vermont Local Roads from St Michaels Collage to Berlin. I spoke with Eric earlier today and he could not tell me how the move would effect how they interact with the towns. I am a fairly new road foreman of 3 years, From the beginning the staff at VLR has always answered my questions in full in a timely manner, they have always gone above and beyond their needs of contacting others when I needed a definite answer quickly. Eric has set me up with a program to collect and log my daily activity's to better help me understand where money is being spent and where we could do a better job at reducing our costs. The classes they offer are always very educational and thought out.

In summery, I believe Vermont Local Roads and municipality's like myself need more information why this is being done and how the collaboration will benefit the way information is being passed onto towns. Vermont Local Roads is a lifeline for me the way they are now....." If it isn't broke, don't fix it"....

My contact information is posted below,

Steve

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I do not think that this merge is in the best interest of the Towns. It appears like more state control and the services would not be as complete as what VT Local Roads offers currently. The district services under VTRANS has specific areas that they work with Towns on and to merge these two would cause more confusion and lack of services to the Towns. VT Local Roads provides classes and technical assistance at members request and VT Local Road also know what the Towns are up against with state requirements. I also see that the technical assistance would be more at the state level of requirements and the various classes would not be as personal to what the towns actually do with what they have for budgets.

I would like to see the state reasoning for this change? Perhaps they feel that they do not have the control over towns in this area and now want to take that control.

Just my own comments and experience from working with VT Local Roads.

Cindi Jones  
Town of Warren  
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## **TOWN OF BARRE, VERMONT**

### **DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING**

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To: Dave Antoine, Executive Director Vermont Local Roads  
Erik Wells, Program Manager, Vermont Local Roads  
Fran Cerulli, Transportation Committee Legislative Assistant

From: Harry H. Hinrichsen, Town Engineer

Re: Proposed Restructuring of Vermont Local Roads Program

Date: March 6, 2014

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I have been involved with both the training programs and the instruction provided by the Vermont Local Roads Program since 1993. As the Town Engineer of the Town of Barre, I have participated in and completed the Local Roads Scholar Program and the Management Academy.

I believe the Local Roads Program provides a valuable resource to both state and local government officials and to the members of both state and municipal highway departments through its workshops and hands-on training. The program has offered these training sessions in a wide variety of formats and at various locations across the state of Vermont in order to reach a broad sector of the workforce employed in the public sector.

The fact that the Local Roads Program is being restructured in and of itself is not that surprising as the LTAP is currently operated within the Agencies of Transportation in many of our neighboring states in New England. I am concerned that the program is being restructured without much dialog between the Agency of Transportation, the Local Roads staff, VLCT and the vast number of municipal officials that are served by the program.

In the past there have been issues that evolved around accountability, about goals and objectives and sustainability. There have also been questions dealing with budget expenses such as staffing, benefits and overhead.

I believe that before there is any change to actually move the program from its current venue at St. Michael's College to any other location, there should be a strategic plan for maintaining the program with its various training components, contacts and resources. The outreach that is available from the Local Roads Program is generally not available from the Agency of Transportation.

I would be glad to testify to the House Transportation Committee is provided the opportunity.

Erik,

As a highway staff person who regularly is in contact with the Vermont Local Roads Program (VLRP) staff, I cannot support the proposed restructuring of the VLRP as defined in the 2014 Transportation Bill. With minimal staff, VLRP covers the entire state with educational programs and materials to assist municipal highway staff, giving them opportunities to improve their job performance and reduce costs to the municipality.

In addition, working with the VLRP staff has been very positive:

- Program materials are regularly distributed;
- emails are answered promptly;
- workshops are effective, interesting and educational; and
- focus is placed squarely on the municipalities of Vermont.

It is risky to assume that this program can be shifted from an educational institution to an agency of state government and still maintain its effectiveness. Please support the leaving the VLRP as it currently exists.

Thank you for your consideration.

Katie Reilley  
Highway Department Staff  
New Haven, VT  
453 3516

Hi Eric,

This sounds like a classic case of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” I have not been closely involved with the Local Roads program in a number of years, but I am probably one of the few town administrator’s to have completed the Road Scholar Program – that was back in the mid-90s when Hank was still director. It was a selectboard member who was a VTrans engineer when I worked for East Montpelier who encouraged me to attend the program. While I am still far from an engineer nor ready to go out and plow snow, as a result of the program I have been able to better understand road issues, support my road departments, and been able to explain road matters to citizens.

I have always encouraged my road crews to attend the seminars and have had employees trained on site with equipment such as graders. I have called upon the program on a number of occasions, including using Steve Jerome as an expert in analyzing a drainage issue that our foreman and I were being sued about in small claims court. I have always had a good working relationship with various folks at VTrans, but for the life of me I can see no good reason to move Vermont Local Roads into the biggest bureaucracy in Vermont. The Vermont Local Roads is about LOCAL road operations – it should remain in a place where it is independent and where it responds primarily to the needs of its primary constituents – local road departments.

Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help as this issue develops.

Bill Bryant

Bristol Town Administrator

(and formerly Town Administrator for Waitsfield 1989 to 2006 and East Montpelier 1991 to 1999)

453-2410