



Testimony on Value of Agency of Transportation District Technical Staff Positions to Towns

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My name is Chris Campany, and I am the Executive Director of the Windham Regional Commission and the Chair of the Transportation Committee of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA). I want to thank the Committees for this opportunity to discuss the value of VTrans District Technical Staff to the state's towns and regions, and to suggest that the limited service positions be made permanent.

The scope of support provided by permanent and limited service District Technicians, or District Techs, is both broad and important. During disasters and other emergencies they assist towns with the assessment of structures and the development of recovery strategies. As new statutory and regulatory requirements are put in place, they advise towns on what these requirements mean, and how they can best be implemented. They work with road foremen on the use of best practices associated with not only with new regulations, but also with new technologies, road safety, and worker safety. They serve as liaisons between not only the towns and VTrans, but the U.S. Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well. They assist with cost estimating, requesting hydraulic studies, project development and management, permitting, construction oversight and analysis, and town highway grants management. They assist with the Better Back Roads program, and they work with Vermont Local Roads and its programs. They serve these functions in addition to their specific VTrans tasks.

I think of District Techs and the role that they play in our communities as that of transportation extension agents. They bring technical skills and knowledge directly to those who work in the field; our road foremen and their crews. In the case of small towns without road crews, they provide direct technical support to selectboards and advise them as they consult with contractors. The work of the District Techs saves our towns, and the state, time and money.

For example, through their assistance with town adoption of road and bridge codes and standards, they help put in place the conditions by which new structures are built to better withstand future flooding, thereby reducing long-run costs, and they support the establishment of a standards

framework which FEMA should recognize when developing future project worksheets. Their representation of a town's interests in discussions with FEMA can mean the difference between the repair of a structure and the replacement of a structure in a manner that provides mitigation against future damage. This can save a town tens of thousands of dollars or much more. Similarly, their regular provision of construction and project management advice saves towns money.

Beyond time and cost savings, there's the direct impact the District Techs have on achieving state goals. I've mentioned how essential they are to town adoption and implementation of Vermont Town Road and Bridge Standards. They also assist with the implementation of the goals set forth in the Complete Streets statute. Looking forward, the implementation of conditions associated with the total maximum daily load (TMDL) agreement developed between the state and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will require a serious commitment on the part of the towns, and one could reasonably anticipate that the need for assistance from District Techs will increase considerably.

Also looking forward, as the regions, towns and VTrans districts work together to better report and document transportation infrastructure damage caused by any storm event, we will build a record that should result in faster disaster declaration reporting, and just as importantly, build the record that is necessary for better hazard mitigation planning and meeting the benefit-cost analysis requirements associated with hazard mitigation grants. District Techs have always played a critical role in damage reporting and assessment, and we need to make long-term record keeping of any damage a habit for better planning and more aggressive and effective use of federal disaster recovery and mitigation funding.

In closing, it is my experience that District Techs provide essential services to our towns. The demand for their services will likely only increase, and it is my suggestion that the limited service positions be made permanent. Thank you for your consideration.