



Town of Colchester Testimony I 89 Exit 16 Development and Improvements By Dawn Francis, Town Manager

Colchester supports the Costco store addition and gas pumps as well as the VTrans proposed improvements to the Interstate 89 Exit 16 intersection.

- Exit 16 is a state, regional and local economic center with the jobs and grand list generated by this center benefitting the entire state (almost 10,000 jobs from Colchester biz and approximately \$276 million in commercial investment in the Exit 16/Sev Corner area)
- Shaw's, CVS and Costco are heavily relied upon by Colchester, Winooski and Milton residents
- Traffic generated by destination and pass through commuter traffic has resulted in unsafe and congested conditions both for cars and pedestrians
- Delays headed south bound toward Winooski during peak hours also create unsafe conditions
- Costco has said consumers will pay significantly less for gas than the surrounding stations
- Improvements proposed by VTrans will significantly improve traffic, pedestrian flows and contribute to overall community and economic vitality

Costco

- Obtained approval for a store addition in 2009 from the Development Review Board.
- Costco originally wanted to separate the addition from the gas pumps to get it advanced first. When the addition was appealed, they came back in 2011 with a combined application for both the addition and the gas pumps that was subsequently appealed again.
- Colchester staff has spent hundreds of hours in staff review time as well as in Act 250, state permitting processes and court proceedings defending their decision to approve Costco.
- Since 2013 our legal bill was over \$12,000 in support of both Costco and VTrans Exit 16 improvements. When legal costs continued to escalate due to the town being involved in the numerous appeals, a decision was made for us to represent ourselves.
- The VT Supreme Court upheld the Costco permits in 2016; however kept the ACT 250 stipulation that Costco is required to have traffic improvements prior to opening the gas station.
- While Costco could go forward, it does not have the ability to condemn right of way and would be reliant upon the VTrans stormwater permits (also under appeal) for the improvements. The Town issued the building permit for the gas station last year and it is now complete with a conditional CO. However, The Act 250 conditions do not permit it to open.

Exit 16 Intersection Project

The intersection improvements began as the Exit 16 Circulation Study by CCRPC in 2009. Since VTrans began developing the project as we now know it, staff has easily spent hundreds of hours on this project alone with planning, engineering, consultation, legal, coordination, etc.

- Staff most recently had to defend a finding relating to the Act 250 criteria 10 (conformance to town plans) that the project met the criteria and had to prepare for and participate in a deposition for VTrans which took significant resources and involved legal counsel.