

Hello, my name is Charles Safford. I am the Stowe Town Manager and also a member of the VLCT Board of Directors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your continuing efforts to keep *Vermont Moving*.

I particularly want to thank the Vermont Legislature for amending 19 VSA 306 to ensure the Town Highway Aid formula is adjusted annually.

With this being said, today I want to focus on Stormwater Funding:

*Stormwater management is a hugely expensive obligation for local governments, even with assistance from the Clean Water Fund. According to the Vermont Clean Water Initiative 2019 Performance Report, out of a total of 13,000 municipal road miles, only 169 miles of municipal road drainage and erosion control improvements have been implemented. Stowe in-and-of-itself has 95 miles of roadway of which the initial Vermont ANR screen determined that *approximately 48 miles of roadway for a total of 800 segments were hydrologically-connected*.

*Towns are required to bring all hydrologically-connected roadway segments up to the MRGP standard as soon as possible, but no later than December 31, 2036. The connected roadway segments that are considered very high priority are to be upgraded to meet the MRGP standards by December 31, 2025. According to a report prepared by our engineering consultants, the estimated construction cost for Stowe to bring its very high priority road segments into compliance is \$230,000 per year over the next five years and all other road segments \$180,000 over the next 16 years. The total estimated construction cost is \$4 million dollars. This doesn't include other stormwater permit requirements such as the 3-acre rule.

*The Clean Water Board State FY'21 Clean Water Budget recommends an increase in Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid from \$3.2 million to \$3.7 million statewide. This is only a \$500,000 increase statewide at a time we are supposed to be ramping up our compliance efforts. In FY'17 and '18 Stowe

received 100% reimbursement for MRGP stormwater projects, by FY'19 that was down to 50% and in FY'20 it was down to 21.8%.

*In its FY'21 Budget the Town of Stowe has increased its stormwater expenditure budget from \$75,000 to \$235,00 which is an increase of \$160,000. The Selectboard is also seeking approval to add an Assistant Engineer to help with stormwater planning and implementation. Total compensation cost for this position is budgeted at \$114,413.

*Even though Stowe does not have any impaired waterways along our municipal roadways we are disproportionally impacted by road standards and stormwater regulations due to our steep slopes. Admittedly there are a number of roadways with ditches that do not meet current standard due to our topography, ledge, and utilities. Also, while the community has been a leader in environmental stewardship with over a third of Stowe's 72 square miles being conserved, the community has resisted widening roadways that may involve the taking of trees and diminishing the community's character. Stowe is a tourism community and has more locally designated scenic roads than the rest of Vermont combined. Surveys indicate the number one activity of tourist is to drive around to enjoy her scenic beauty. Although there are some allowances for scenic landscapes in the MRGP, it is going to be a struggle to balance managing stormwater permitting requirements with maintaining the community's character.

*While there is a benefit to storm water improvements, there is also a cost. A cost that the State budget does not appear to fully recognize to date. I encourage you to increase Municipal Grants In Aid funding, so that the statewide goal of cleaning up the public waters of the State of Vermont does not fall on the municipalities and property tax payers.