



Dear Senate Transportation Committee members,

As Vermont's statewide walk/bike advocacy group, Local Motion has a strong interest in improving the safety of Vermont's streets and roads. Please find below several policy recommendations that we believe will make our transportation system safer, more sustainable, more equitable, and better for Vermont communities. We look forward to discussing these recommendations with you during our testimony on March 9, 2022.

### **Updating the Vermont State Standards**

We recommend allocating funds for an update of VTrans' Vermont State Design Standards, and setting a timeline for completion of this update. [This recommendation was identified in a report commissioned by VTrans in 2013](#), and supports many provisions found in H.552—ensuring that complete streets and smart growth principles are applied to transportation projects in a way that supports climate action goals and community vitality.

The current standards were written in 1997, and have since been supplemented with Highway Safety and Design Engineering Instructions (HSDEI). The age of the core standards document, combined with the prevalence of HSDEI, creates potential for inconsistencies and confusion in how VTrans applies standards. There are also numerous new best practices developed by national transportation associations which are not represented in the standards. The current standards do not sufficiently integrate [Safe Systems](#) and [smart growth](#) principles, which are key to reducing fatalities and injuries, achieving the objectives in Vermont's Climate Action Plan, and supporting our vibrant downtowns and villages.

### **Walk/Bike Project Funding**

VTrans' Bike and Pedestrian Program is a key source of funding for walk/bike infrastructure projects that have been vetted and are supported by communities. This well-established grant is underfunded, with annual requests greatly exceeding the amount of funding available. We recommend at least doubling the amount of funding allocated to the Bike and Pedestrian Program so that it can meet current demand. This will allow many shovel-ready pedestrian and bike projects to be constructed and help the state rapidly transition to more sustainable modes of transportation, improve safety, attract tourism, and support the vitality of our communities.

### **Supporting Transit**

Transit is an essential service for the large and likely growing population of Vermonters who do not drive. These include some of our most vulnerable populations: those with disabilities, low-incomes, BIPOC folks, New Americans, our children, and our elderly adults. The establishment of fare-free transit in Vermont was one good side-effect of the pandemic, and we support the continuation of fare-free rides.

However, it is not enough to sustain transit at its current level of service and amenities, or worse, to allow service cuts. Our response to reduced ridership during the pandemic must not be service reductions. This creates a negative feedback loop in which a decline in ridership

results in reductions in service, which result in further declines in ridership. Furthermore, cutting service can result in a higher number of people on each remaining bus. This constitutes a public health hazard, and a further disincentive to ridership that is borne by the most vulnerable Vermonters. This effect is already visible in our urban areas, where recent service cuts have resulted in riders being packed into buses without room to move or maintain safe distances.

Devoting millions of dollars to subsidies for electric cars that will largely benefit well-off Vermonters while allowing transit to remain in its marginal state or degrade even further runs contrary to our commitment to climate justice. We must go beyond the current funding allocation and make the necessary investments so that transit is the quickest, most accessible, and most convenient way to travel distances outside of walking range—especially in our more densely populated areas.

Thank you for your attention to the important issue of roadway safety, and for inviting us to provide testimony. We are always available for further questions and discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Yacos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Yacos".

Karen Yacos  
Executive Director - Local Motion