

1 H.834

2 Introduced by Representatives Lalley of Shelburne, Keyser of Rutland City,

3 Pouech of Hinesburg, Tomlinson of Winooski, and Wells of

4 Brownington

5 Referred to Committee on

6 Date:

7 Subject: Motor vehicles; operation of vehicles; local speed limits; stopping,

8 standing, and parking; crosswalks; center turn lanes; passing vehicles;

9 bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; class 1 town highways

10 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to permit

11 municipalities to adopt speed limits under 25 miles per hour in downtown

12 centers, village centers, and thickly settled districts; to permit the Agency of

13 Transportation to adopt a Vermont State supplement to future Manuals on

14 Uniform Traffic Control Devices; to prohibit parking within a certain distance

15 of crosswalks; to permit municipalities to allow vehicle unloading or bicycle or

16 scooter parking within a certain distance of crosswalks; to prohibit the use of a

17 center turn lane to pass other vehicles under certain circumstances; and to

18 study the potential for municipalities and regional planning commissions to

19 assist the Agency of Transportation in implementing future updates to the

20 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, potential approaches to

21 increasing the use of bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and

1 potential measures to increase the conversion of State highways to class 1 town
2 highways.

3 An act relating to traffic calming measures for village centers and
4 pedestrian and bicycle safety

5 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

6 Sec. 1. 23 V.S.A. § 1007 is amended to read:

7 § 1007. LOCAL SPEED LIMITS

8 * * *

9 (g) Notwithstanding any requirements of section 1025 of this title,
10 ~~downtown development districts designated under 24 V.S.A. chapter 76A an~~
11 area that is a downtown center or village center pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 5803
12 may have posted speed limits of less than 25 miles per hour.

13 (h)(1) As used in this subsection, “thickly settled district” means a portion
14 of State, city, town, or village highway, or any combination of these, that:

15 (A) is at least one-fifth of a mile in length; and
16 (B) has commercial, industrial, or residential structures, or any
17 combination of the three, located along it that are an average of 200 feet or less
18 from each other.

19 (2) The legislative body of a municipality may by a majority vote
20 designate as a thickly settled district any portion of highway located in the

jurisdiction of the municipality that meets the requirements of subdivision (1)
of this subsection.

3 (3) Notwithstanding any requirements of section 1025 of this title, the
4 legislative body of a municipality may by a majority vote establish a speed
5 limit of 25 miles per hour on any highway in a thickly settled district
6 designated pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection.

7 Sec. 2. 24 V.S.A. § 5803 is amended to read:

8 § 5803. DESIGNATION OF DOWNTOWN AND VILLAGE CENTERS

9 * * *

(f) Benefits Steps. A center may receive the benefits associated with the steps in this section by meeting the established requirements. The Department shall review applications from municipalities to advance from Step One to Two and from Step Two to Three and issue written decisions. The Department shall issue a written administrative decision within 30 days following an application. If a municipal application is rejected by the Department, the municipality may appeal the administrative decision to the State Board. To maintain a downtown approved under chapter 76A after December 31, 2026, the municipality shall apply for renewal following a regional planning approval by the LURB and meet the program requirements. Step Three designations that are not approved for renewal revert to Step Two. The municipality may appeal the administrative decision of the Department to the

1 State Board. Appeals of administrative decisions shall be heard by the State
2 Board at the next meeting following a timely filing stating the reasons for the
3 appeal. The State Board's decision is final. The Department shall issue
4 guidance to administer these steps.

5 (1) Step One.

6 (A) Requirements. Step One is established to create an accessible
7 designation for all villages throughout the State to become eligible for funding
8 and technical assistance to support site-based improvements and planning. All
9 downtown and village centers shall automatically reach Step One upon
10 approval of the regional plan future land use map by the LURB. Regional plan
11 future land use maps supersede preexisting designated areas that may already
12 meet the Step One requirement.

13 (B) Benefits. A center that reaches Step One is eligible for the
14 following benefits:

15 (i) funding and technical assistance eligibility for site-based
16 projects, including the Better Places Grant Program under section 5810 of this
17 chapter, access to the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Program
18 described in 32 V.S.A. § 5930aa et seq., and other programs identified in the
19 Department's guidance; and

20 (ii) funding priority for developing or amending the municipal
21 plan, visioning, and assessments; and

3 (2) Step Two.

4 * * *

5 (B) Benefits. In addition to the benefits of Step One, a center that
6 reaches Step Two is eligible for the following benefits:

7 * * *

8 (v) authority for the municipal legislative body to establish speed
9 limits of less than 25 mph within the center under 23 V.S.A. § 1007(e);

10 [Repealed.]

11 * * *

12 Sec. 3. 23 V.S.A. § 1025 is amended to read:

13 § 1025. STANDARDS

14 (a) The To the extent that the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal
15 Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for
16 Streets and Highways (MUTCD), as amended, does not conflict with the
17 provisions of this title and Title 19, it shall be the standards for all traffic
18 control signs, signals, and markings within the State. The standards set forth in
19 the MUTCD shall be amended by the Secretary as necessary to comply with
20 the provisions of this title and Title 19 through the adoption of a supplement.
21 The supplement shall be adopted pursuant to the provisions of the

1 Administrative Procedure Act, 3 V.S.A. chapter 25. Revisions to the MUTCD
2 shall be adopted according to the implementation or compliance dates
3 established in federal rules.

4 (b) To the extent consistent with federal law, projects beyond a preliminary
5 state of design that are anticipated to be constructed within two years of the
6 otherwise applicable effective date may be constructed according to the
7 MUTCD and State supplement standards applicable at the design stage.

13 (d) The standards of the MUTCD and the State supplement shall apply for
14 both State and local authorities as to traffic control devices under their
15 respective jurisdiction.

16 * * *

17 Sec. 4. 23 V.S.A. § 1104 is amended to read:

18 § 1104. STOPPING PROHIBITED

19 (a) Except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic, or in
20 compliance with law or the directions of an enforcement officer or official
21 traffic-control device, no person may:

1

* * *

2 (2) Stand or park a vehicle, whether occupied or not, except
3 momentarily to pick up or discharge a passenger:

4

* * *

5 (C) within 20 feet of a marked or unmarked crosswalk at an
6 intersection or within 15 feet of a marked or unmarked crosswalk where a curb
7 extension is present;

8

* * *

9 (c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (a)(2)(C) of this section,
10 the legislative body of a municipality may:

11 (1) establish a different distance from a marked or unmarked crosswalk
12 in which a vehicle is not permitted to park if:

17 (2) permit loading or unloading, or both, by commercial vehicles within
18 20 feet of a crosswalk, or within 15 feet of a marked or unmarked crosswalk
19 where a curb extension is present, if:

3 (3) permit parking for bicycles or motorized scooters within 20 feet of a
4 marked or unmarked crosswalk.

5 Sec. 5. 23 V.S.A. § 1038 is amended to read:

6 § 1038. DRIVING ON ROADWAYS LANED FOR TRAFFIC

7 Whenever any roadway has been divided into two or more clearly marked
8 lanes for traffic, the following rules shall apply in addition to all others
9 consistent therewith:

10 * * *

19 * * *

1 Sec. 6. STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND SUPPORT FOR ADOPTION OF
2 FUTURE UPDATES AND SUPPLEMENTS TO MANUAL ON
3 UNIFORM TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES; REPORT

4 The Agency of Transportation, in consultation with the Vermont League of
5 Cities and Towns and the Vermont Association of Planning and Development
6 Agencies, shall examine the potential for the Agency to collaborate with or
7 utilize assistance from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Vermont
8 Association of Planning and Development Agencies, and Vermont
9 municipalities and regional planning commissions when adopting future
10 versions of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and related
11 supplements. The Agency shall, on or before January 15, 2027, submit to the
12 House and Senate Committees on Transportation a written report with its
13 findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

14 Sec. 7. BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE; REPORT
15 (a) The Agency of Transportation, in consultation with the Vermont
16 League of Cities and Towns, the Vermont Association of Planning and
17 Development Agencies, and other relevant stakeholders, shall study the
18 barriers and challenges to the development and implementation of bicycle and
19 pedestrian infrastructure projects in Vermont and identify potential approaches
20 to address those barriers and challenges.

1 (b) In conducting the study required pursuant to subsection (a) of this

2 section, the Agency shall, among other issues, examine:

3 (1) the ability of smaller municipalities to access funding, including
4 identifying challenges associated with applying for grants, administrative
5 burdens, and matching fund requirements;

6 (2) general funding constraints for municipalities, including the
7 adequacy of current funding;

8 (3) impacts related to federal funding requirements on project costs and
9 timelines;

10 (4) regulatory and environmental constraints, including permitting
11 processes and requirements, Act 250 and local zoning review, and federal and
12 State environmental review requirements;

13 (5) potential cost barriers, including costs related to right-of-way
14 acquisition, engineering, construction, and maintenance;

15 (6) impacts related to competing municipal priorities for transportation
16 investments, including maintenance or replacement of aging infrastructure,
17 infrastructure replacement and upgrades related to climate resilience, and
18 competing active transportation priorities;

19 (7) design and right-of-way challenges related to the construction of
20 bicycle and pedestrian improvements along State highways;

1 (8) visual and other cues for motor vehicle operators that could make
2 reductions in the speed limit or the entrance to a downtown center or village
3 center more apparent, including the use of signage, traffic control devices,
4 vegetation, or other cues; and

5 (9) potential institutional and community barriers, including public
6 perception, interagency coordination, and land use policy inconsistencies.

7 (c) On or before December 31, 2027, the Agency shall submit a written
8 report to the House Committees on Environment and on Transportation and to
9 the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy and on
10 Transportation. The report shall include the Agency's findings pursuant to
11 subsection (b) of this section and shall:

12 (1) review existing funding mechanisms for bicycle and pedestrian
13 infrastructure and their utilization by municipalities;

14 (2) present case studies of successful and unsuccessful bicycle and
15 pedestrian infrastructure projects;

16 (3) identify potential legislative and rule changes to reduce barriers to
17 municipal construction of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure;

18 (4) recommend approaches to improve technical assistance to small
19 municipalities exploring or undertaking bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
20 projects;

1 (5) identify opportunities to increase the capacity of small municipalities
2 to undertake bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects;
3 (6) propose strategies to streamline the State permitting and funding
4 application processes;
5 (7) propose potential lower-cost strategies to increase pedestrian and
6 bicycle safety in downtown centers and village centers; and
7 (8) evaluate alternative funding models and other opportunities to
8 increase investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

9 Sec. 8. INCREASED UTILIZATION OF CLASS 1 TOWN HIGHWAYS;
10 TASK FORCE; REPORT

11 (a) Creation. There is created the Class 1 Town Highway Task Force to
12 examine potential opportunities to increase the amount of State highways in
13 downtown centers and village centers that are reclassified as class 1 town
14 highways.

15 (b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following
16 members:

17 (1) the Secretary of Transportation or designee;
18 (2) the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development or
19 designee;
20 (3) the Chair of the Vermont Association of Planning and Development
21 Agencies or designee;

1 (4) the Executive Director of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns
2 or designee;

3 (5) the State Director of AARP Vermont or designee;
4 (6) the Executive Director of Local Motion or designee; and
5 (7) the Executive Director of the Vermont Public Transit Association or
6 designee.

7 (c) Powers and duties. The Task Force shall study opportunities to increase
8 the amount of State highways in downtown centers and village centers that are
9 reclassified as class 1 town highways. In conducting its study, the Task Force
10 shall actively engage with and seek input from stakeholders and other
11 interested parties. The Task Force's study shall include the following issues:

12 (1) opportunities to increase municipal maintenance funding;
13 (2) potential measures to allow municipalities to raise additional funding
14 for the maintenance of class 1 town highways, including potential statutory
15 changes or changes to State grant programs;

16 (3) potential changes to State funding for municipal highways and
17 transportation infrastructure, including changes to existing grant programs and
18 the development of State revenue streams dedicated to municipal highways;

19 and

20 (4) potential changes to maintenance practices and equipment, including
21 changes to snow plows and snow removal equipment, to enable the

1 development of locally appropriate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and
2 safety interventions.

3 (d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical,
4 and legal assistance of the Agencies of Transportation and of Commerce and
5 Community Development.

6 (e) Report. On or before January 15, 2027, the Task Force shall submit a
7 written report to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation with its
8 findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

9 (f) Meetings.

10 (1) The Secretary of Transportation shall call the first meeting of the
11 Task Force to occur on or before September 15, 2026.

12 (2) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the
13 first meeting.

14 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

15 (4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on January 30, 2027.

16 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATES

17 (a) Sec. 3 (adoption of MUTCD and supplements) shall take effect on July
18 1, 2027, and shall apply beginning with the Agency of Transportation's
19 adoption of the next edition of the federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control
20 Devices.

1 (b) This section and the remaining sections shall take effect on July 1,
2 2026.