

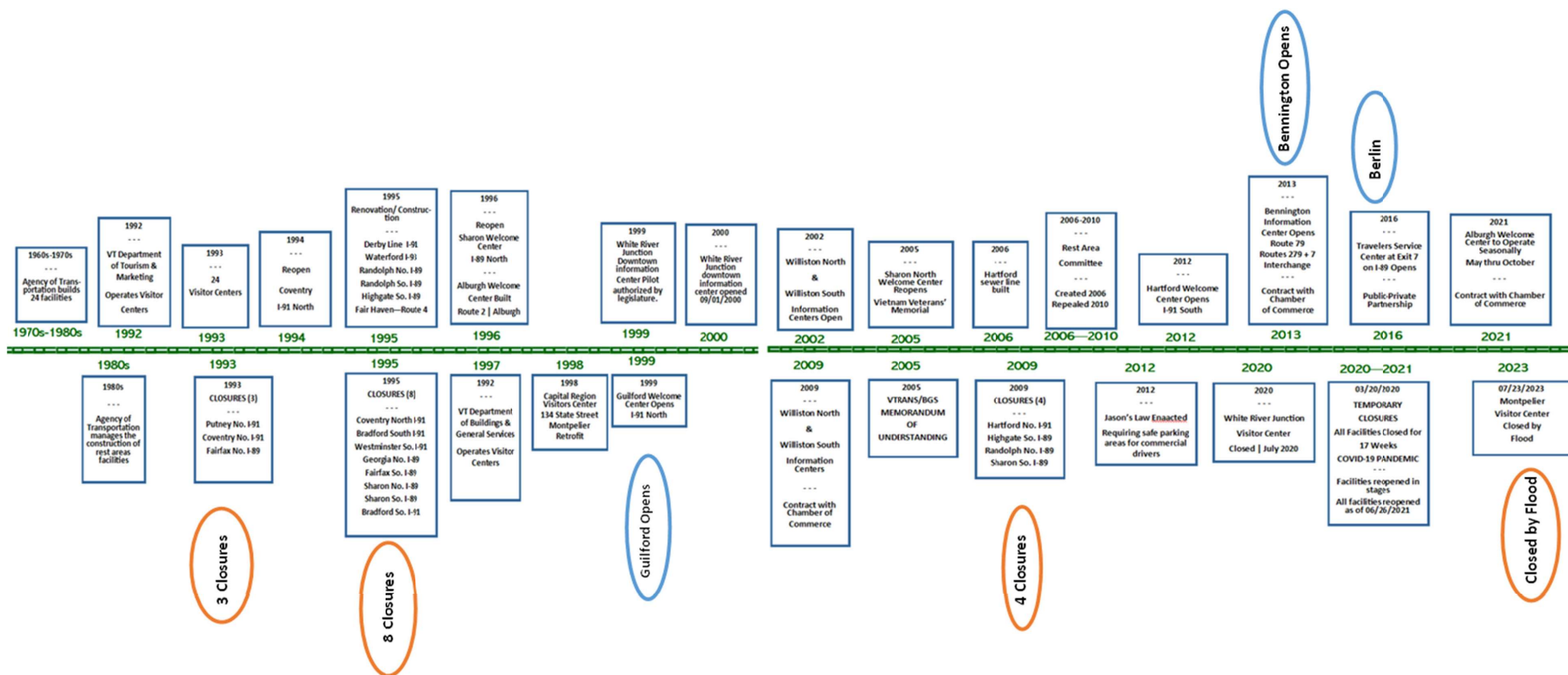


## Vermont Information Centers Division March 2025

Wanda Minoli, Commissioner  
Emily Kisicki, Deputy Commissioner

# Goals

- ▶ Facilities are open and available 365 days a year to serve traveler needs for safety breaks and information.
- ▶ Provide superior customer service that includes staff's welcoming attitude and knowledge of the available attractions, events, and services.
- ▶ To direct travelers into Vermont's communities.
- ▶ Provide clean facilities.
- ▶ Employ well-trained staff.
- ▶ Provide consistent oversight to ensure the visitor experiences the same level of service at each facility.







16 Information/Welcome Centers

Montpelier closed since the July 2023 Flood

4 Supervisory Districts

Hours of Operation Vary by Site

Predominantly single-layer staffing

318 Miles of Interstate Highway

1 Public-Private Partnership- I-89, Exit 7 in Berlin

1 Public-Private Partnership – I-91, Exit 19 in Waits River

### Hours of Operations

Alburgh

9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Thurs – Mon\*

Bennington

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Bradford

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Derby Line

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Fair Haven

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Georgia N.

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Georgia S.

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Guilford

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Hartford

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Lyndonville

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Randolph

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Sharon

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Waterford

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Williston N.

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

Williston S.

7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., 7 days a week

\*Operates seasonally May through October

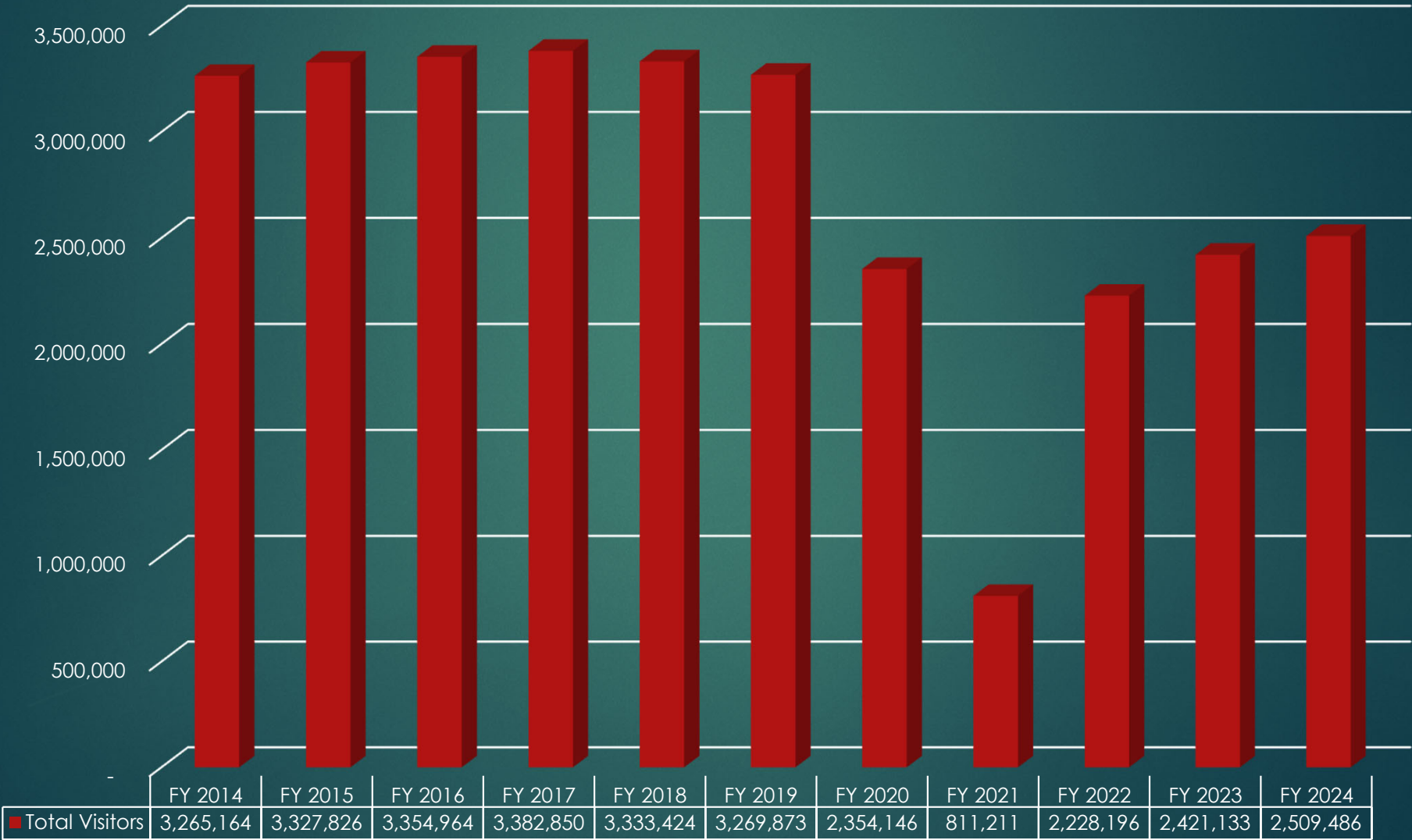


VICD   16 Facilities	Mile Marker	Highway Location + North/South Direction			
		I-89	I-91	I-93	Other
Alburgh   Route 2	3.35				X
Bradford	100		North		
Bennington   Rts 279 and 7					X
Derby Line	176.5		South		
Fair Haven   Route 4	0.0				X
Georgia North	110	North			
Georgia South	110.5	South			
Guilford	5.5		North		
Hartford	68.2		South		
Lyndonville	141		South		
Montpelier   134 State St.	53	Exit 8			X
Randolph	33.5	South			
Sharon	10	North			
Waterford	1.5			North	
Williston North	82	North			
Williston South	83	South			

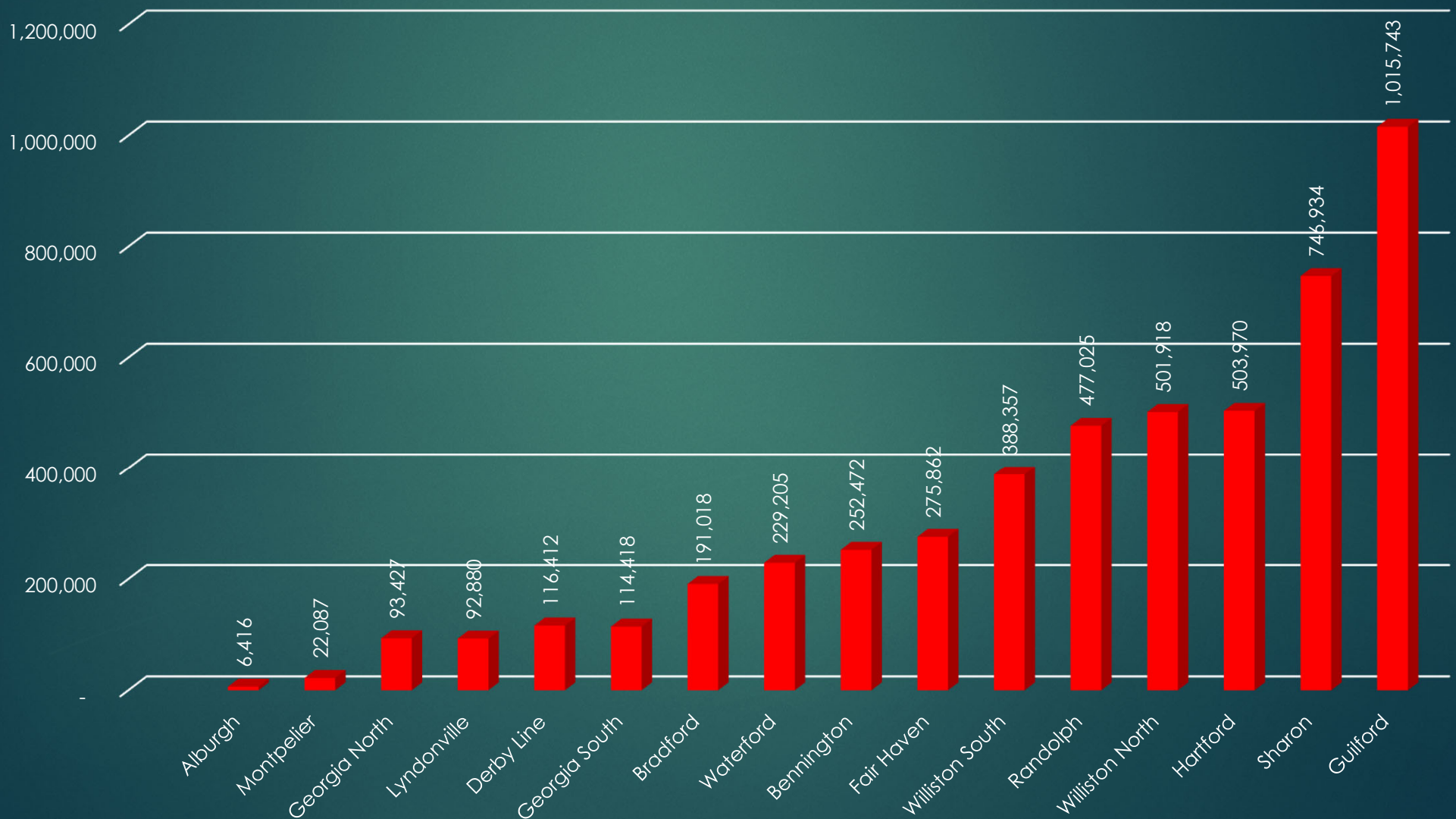
Operated by Contracts with Chambers of Commerce

VERMONT INFORMATION CENTERS DIVISION				
WELCOME CENTERS   VERMONT POINTS OF ENTRY				
	Northbound or Southbound	Mile Marker	Name of the Facility	Traffic Entry Source
Interstate-91	North	5	Guilford Welcome Center	Western MA
	South	68.2	Hartford Welcome Center	NH and Eastern MA from I-89
	South	176.5	Derby Line Welcome Center	Canada
Interstate-93	North	1.5	Waterford Welcome Center	NH Interstate 93
Interstate-89	North	10	Sharon Welcome Center	NH and Eastern MA
Route 4	East/West	0.0	Fair Haven Welcome Center	Northern NY   East of Rutland

Vermont Information Centers Division  
Total Visitors | FY 2014 thru FY 2024



## Vermont Information Centers Division Visitor Traffic Per Facility | CY 2024





# Highgate Welcome Center

7

Visitation Statistics Prior to Closing (2009)	
FY2008	79,695
FY2007	79,040
FY2006	62,103
FY2005	54,148

Guilford Welcome Center Front Plaza



Welcome Center Barn Art



Front Desk



The Guilford Meadow



Picnic Area Birches & Playground



Crabapple Orchard





The building is open from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM with courteous, knowledgeable travel professionals who will assist you with directions, where to stay and dine, and current happenings.

Provide information on maple sugarhouses, cheesemakers, breweries, wineries, farmers' markets, skiing, golfing, camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, boating, bicycling, music, theater, museums, galleries, antiques, lodging, ning, bookstores and shopping.



Art & Furniture Displays



8 Locked Display Cases



The Guilford Welcome Center Display Program is available to Vermont artists, businesses, chambers of commerce, craftspeople, furniture makers, and galleries.

There is no charge for the program. Displays are scheduled in advance and change monthly.





Vermont's Information and Welcome Centers serve over 7,000 travelers each day and are an important planning resource utilized by Vermont tourists. In a state absent of billboards and with limited directional signage, Information Centers serve the purpose of providing helpful, courteous and knowledgeable information to our visitors. This places us in the unique position of being able to influence the traveler passing through the state.

Eye-catching displays, colorful brochure racks, and knowledgeable and enthusiastic employees are persuasive tools that encourage the visitor to linger in Vermont; visitors that represent

## **Guilford Welcome Center**

### **History | Location | Features**

**Opening** | Opened in 1999 | Dedication Ceremony 10/25/1999

**Location** | Mile Marker 5.5 on I-91N

Brattleboro has exits 1, 2, 3 | MMs 7, 9, 11 (see VT Exits map)

#### **History**

Putney North – I-91N closed in 1993 – exit 4 at Mile Marker 18

Westminster South – I-91S closed in 1995 – exit 5 at mile marker 28

#### **Features**

The post and beam structures: a 50 by 100-foot main barn, an acorn crib information kiosk and an outbuilding/picnic area | 7130 sq. ft.

Beautifully landscaped grounds, a 72 foot by 32 foot perennial garden, birch trees interlaced with granite monuments, an apple orchard, and a stone silo observation tower.

Multimedia shows on large-screen televisions, computerized information kiosks, wayfinding computer programs, exhibit panels, stunning photography, displays of fine Vermont made crafts and foods.



## **Guilford Welcome Center**

### **Travel Services Information**

Provide information on maple sugarhouses, cheesemakers, breweries, wineries, farmers' markets, skiing, golfing, camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, boating, bicycling, music, theater, museums, galleries, antiques, lodging, dining, bookstores and shopping.

#### **Available Displays**

Display cases | 8 locked display cases

Free-standing displays, e.g. furniture

**Ad panels** | 15 different advertising panels of various sizes

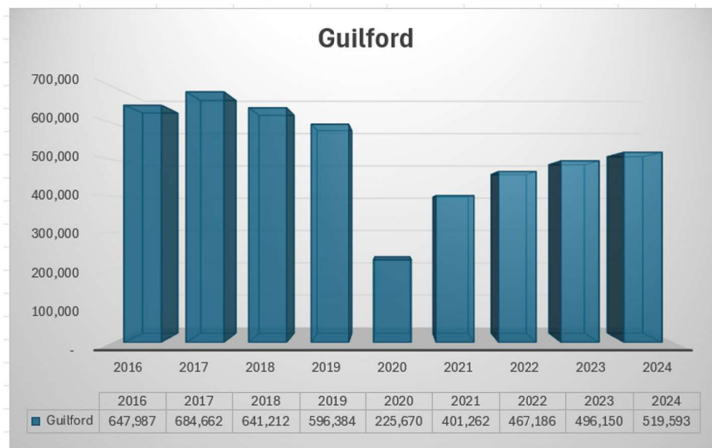
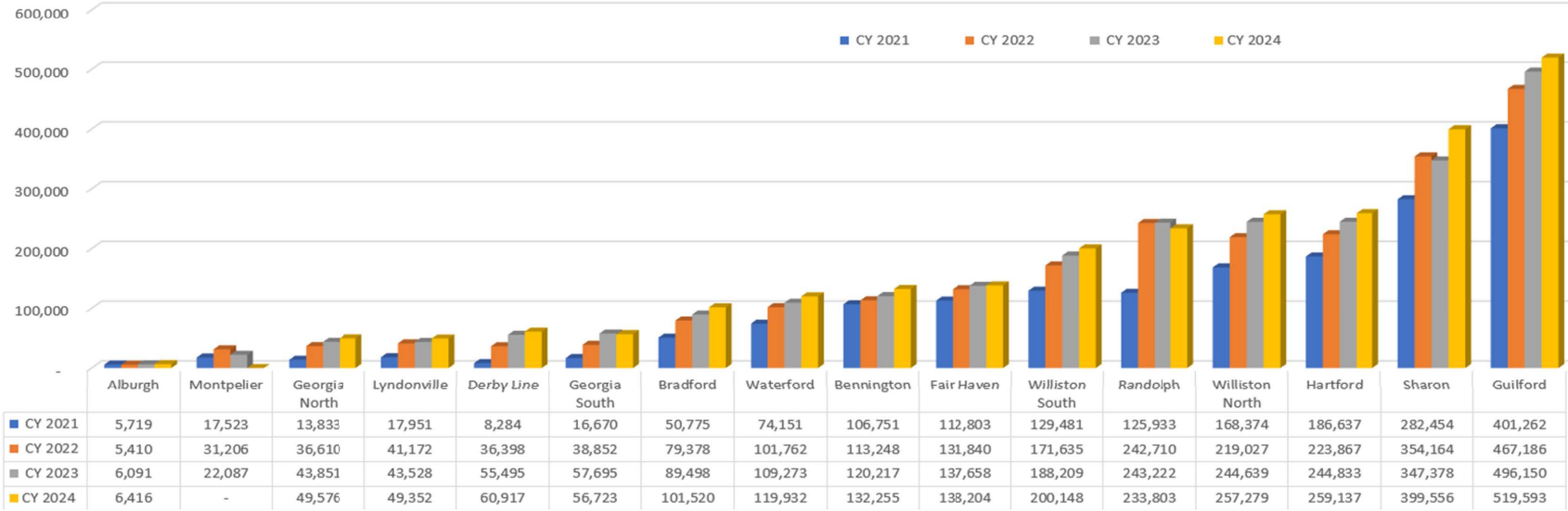
**Registered Brochures** | 165 brochures for winter season | 210 in the coming summer

#### **Guilford Welcome Center | PARKING SPACES**

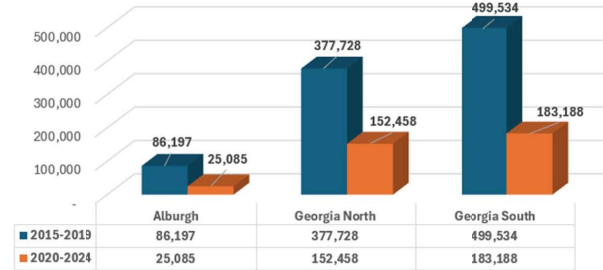
**CAR PARKING | 100**

**TRUCK PARKING | 17**

# Vermont Information Centers Division CY 2021-CY2024 Visitor Traffic - 16 Facilities



## Vermont Information Centers Division VISITOR TRAFFIC | Ten Years | CY 2015 - CY 2024 Alburgh | Georgia North | Georgia South



Alburgh | Seasonal Operation | May of 2022 | 5 Days/Week | 8 Hours/Day



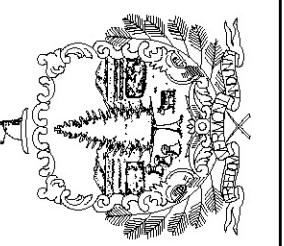
I-91 NORTHBOUND



Main Building - 656 SF  
Property - 29 Acres  
Site as shown - 15 +/- Acres



STATE OF VERMONT  
Department of Buildings  
and General Services  
Agency of Administration  
Montpelier, Vermont



GUILFORD  
WELCOME CENTER  
SITE PLAN

VERMONT

GUILFORD

REVISIONS

SCALE:	AS NOTED
DATE:	JANUARY 2005
DRAWN BY:	S.K. Janawicz
APPR. BY:	-

GUILFORD  
WELCOME CENTER  
SITE  
PLAN

S-1

1 OF 1



**Taken From Report to the 2006 Legislature  
by BGS Engineering**

History

During the late 1980's, a program to reconstruct the rest areas was instituted. As a result, plans were developed for most of the facilities including those recently constructed in Guilford and Williston, and those proposed for reconstruction in Hartford and Randolph.

Unlike the former generation of rest areas, which provided little more than bathroom facilities and a place for travelers to stretch their legs, these new designs sought to capitalize on the numerous opportunities that rest areas present for promoting travel information and travel related services.

In many states, roadside signage helps visitors find services or get clear direction to where they are going. By contrast, in Vermont where we have a strict billboard law and rules limiting directional signage, the traveler has no option but to utilize the assets provided by the State's information centers located across the State. We are, in essence, the directional signs and billboards that are not seen from the roads and byways of our state. Instead, this information is provided in safe, warm and dry centers by friendly and knowledgeable staff whose only mission is to provide answers to travel-related questions and the maintenance of services at that site.

Although all of our rest areas are information centers, those located at entry points to the State also serve as welcome centers and are typically larger to allow for a greater area to display Vermont products, provide travelers assistance and promote tourism within the State. The Williston rest areas, though not considered welcome centers, are larger due to their location on possibly the heaviest traveled section of the Vermont Interstate System. Their size is in keeping with AASHTO Guidelines.

It is accepted universally that the traveling public expects to have convenience services offered to them in their travels. In metropolitan areas, where services are plentiful off the interstate or state-owned routes, convenience services are provided in many cases privately at local gas stations, restaurants or fast food establishments. However, in order to provide the needs of the traveling public, many states operate a network of visitor centers. These centers provide not only convenience services, such as bathrooms and safe rest areas, but also the information that is important to the traveling public when visiting from other states or countries.

According to the "Guide for Development of Rest Areas on Major Arterials and Freeways", prepared by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), "A building's form can create a positive image which in turn fosters a good impression of the state responsible for it. A stripped down building will not save much money and may even leave a negative impression on visitors". As we move forward in the development of the facilities program, our charge to reduce the amount being spent to construct and operate these facilities must be balanced against any impacts to marketing our tourism industry, and meeting the demands that will be placed on these facilities in 20 or 30 years.

		BUILD/REBUILD DATES & SIZE			
	Sites	Location	Original Construction Date	Build/Rebuild Completed	Square Feet
1	Alburlg Welcome Center	Rte 2 W	1996		1150
2	Bennington Welcome Center	Route 7	2013		7500
3	Bradford Information Center	I-91 N	1995		2290
4	Derby Welcome Center	I-91 S	1968		1300
5	Fair Haven Welcome Center	Rte 4	1980	1997	2345
6	Georgia Northbound Information Center	I-89 N	1968	1999	1230
7	Georgia Southbound Information Center	I-89 S	1999		1230
8	Guilford Welcome Center	I-91 N	1999		7130
9	Hartford Southbound Welcome Center	I-91 S	1964	2012	7500
10	Lyndonville Information Center	I-91 S	1973	1996	1300
11	Montpelier - Capital Region Visitors Center	Rte 2 E	Unknown	1998	
12	Randolph Southbound Information Center	I-89 S	1970		1470
13	Sharon Northbound Information Center	I-89 N	1960s	2005	7440
14	Waterford Welcome Center	I-93 N	1982	1997	2340
15	White River Junction Information Center	Downtown	n/a	n/a	n/a
16	Williston Northbound Information Center	I-89 N	1960s	2002	4600
17	Williston Southbound Information Center	I-89 S	1960s	2002	4600



# Rest area complaints grow

Vermont begins to close seven of 20 locations

By Matt Sutkowski  
Free Press Staff Writer

Many tourists and truckers say the long, lonely stretches of Vermont highways seem uncomfortably longer now that the government is closing seven of the state's 20 rest areas to save money.

Already, rest areas on Interstate 89 in Georgia and Fairfax have closed, and that has south-bound motorists from New York or Canada clenching their teeth as they search for a roadside bathroom.

"We had to go four hours before I found a rest area," said John Lally of Brandon, Fla., who held on through northern New York and northwestern Vermont before finding the rest stop on Interstate 89 in Williston.

"I guess they don't want people to travel if the state is closing rest areas," he said.

Another couple, D.N. and Maria Batista of Ottawa, Ontario, said they had looked forward to a picnic lunch at rest areas in Franklin County and found them closed. "We're used to having that rest area there. It was really disappointing," D.N. Batista said.

The Legislature adopted a plan this year to close the seven rest areas along Vermont's interstates to save \$1.3 million. "We're trying to cut back on the number we maintain," Vermont Deputy Transportation Commissioner Glenn Gershank said. "We can't staff all of them. Ideally, a rest area should be open 24 hours a day. We're not able to do that because we have too many and they cost too much."

An American Automobile Association spokesman said that while he understands Vermont needs to save money, rest areas are vital. "Both automobile drivers and truckers need a safe place to pull over, an occasion to take a rest break," said George Vive-



ABOVE: Americo Cruz (left) and D.N. Batista and his wife, Maria Batista, take a break Monday at the Williston south rest area along Interstate 89 while traveling from Ottawa to visit friends in Massachusetts. BELOW: Motorists no longer have the option of stopping at the St. Albans rest area along I-89.



## Vermont rest areas

The state is closing seven rest areas, while renovating the remaining 13.



Renovate building  
Close building

## REST: Cuts a frustration

Continued from Page 1A

One answer might be privatizing rest areas. Such rest areas could be run profitably if a company were allowed to sell food or gasoline.

A group of Franklin County residents is fighting the closure of rest areas in Fairfax and Georgia. Rest areas have many tourist brochures, and the information might encourage people to get off the interstate and visit attractions in Franklin County, said state Rep. Madeline Manahan, D-Enosburg.

Members of the Franklin County group have suggested reopening the rest areas by turning their operation over to a for-profit business.

Gershank said he had asked agency lawyers whether federal law or policy prohibits commercial activity. He expects an answer soon.

## St. Albans council reacts

ST. ALBANS — The St. Albans City Council on Monday voiced support for efforts to reopen the two rest areas on Interstate 89 in Franklin County that the state closed July 5.

"We think they can and should be reopened as soon as possible," Rep. Albert Perry, D-Richford, told aldermen.

Perry and Rep. James Willett, D-St. Albans, said the Franklin County Rest Area Task Force has collected more than 10,000 signatures on petitions that support reopening the facilities. The petitions will be presented to Gov. Howard Dean on Aug. 29.

The task force supports closing the relatively little used state Welcome Center on I-89 in Highgate Springs and shifting its state funding to reopen the two closed rest areas — one southbound and one northbound — near the Georgia-Fairfax line.

Two council members expressed reservations about closing the Welcome Center, which is in the southbound lane, north of the two St. Albans exits on I-89.

— By Richard Cowperthwait

## Rest area closings

- ❖ 1995 tough budget times
- ❖ Governor Howard Dean opts to close rest areas to help balance budget
- ❖ Public outcry
- ❖ Governor changes his mind and embarks on \$30 million capital construction campaign

## Vermont

Wednesday, April 12, 1995

Metro Editor:  
Rob Eley, 660-1822  
or (800) 427-3124

## Rest areas circle the drain

Legislature ready to close seven sites

By Betty Libby  
Free Press Staff Writer

MONTPELIER — The Legislature seems poised to close seven of Vermont's 20 interstate rest areas in order to have more money to repair the remaining

concerns about safety and cost.

The closings were added by the Senate to a transportation bill in a House/Senate conference committee. Negotiators put the measure before House caucus Tuesday to gauge their support.

House Democrats, who hold a large majority, supported the closings. House Republicans did not.

after a public outcry.

If the House approves the closings, demolishing the targeted rest areas would begin this summer.

Rivers explained that the Senate Transportation Committee made its selections on the basis of a number of problems, not for political reasons.

The Coventry rest area was chosen

two murders, a kidnapping and rape, assaults, robberies, drug deals and vandalism.

One of the two rest stops targeted for closure in Franklin County needs a new septic system and expensive renovations to comply with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, Rivers said.

"We've had a problem with these

Sept 4, 1996 38 pcar

THE BURLINGTON FREE PRESS

VERMONT

Barbara Puddicombe of Stowe chats with Travel Ambassador Nora Loura-Lewis of Randolph as other motorists check out maps and brochures at the northbound Randolph rest area on Tuesday. Puddicombe stops at the rest area weekly on her travels, and signed a guest book with a plea to the state to keep the stop open.

## Rest areas may close

### Move could be temporary way to save state money

By Robin Palmer  
TIMOTHY ARJUN STAFF

RANDOLPH — Randolph's two interstate rest areas could close in the next couple of months as the state tries to find budget savings.

The six site employees who work at the rest areas will be retained and offered jobs at the Sharon, Bradford and Hardford rest areas, where there are vacancies. The Randolph rest areas would also be kept intact for possible reuse, said Ed von Turkovich, director of the Information Center Division of the Department of Buildings and General Services.

The closure of the Randolph rest areas were part of the \$39 million in budget cuts announced Monday.

"The Department of Buildings and General Services is looking to contribute to the recession package," von Turkovich said.

The state will save \$200,000 annually by closing the rest areas, which must be maintained, plowed, mowed, staffed and supplied, said von Turkovich.

Deciding to close the rest areas was not easy.

"It's a tough decision to make. These are tough economic (times) for the state and tough decisions must be made."

Ed von Turkovich

At this point, I can't tell you what's going to happen with the facilities... von Turkovich said. "There's no guarantee that they will close at this point."

If approved, the rest areas will not close for about 60 days, he said. The northbound Randolph rest area will also be reopened in about 12 months when construction on a new northbound Sharon rest area, or welcome center, begins.

Also, said von Turkovich, "I think we're looking at how we would recycle those buildings through use of other agencies (such as VTtrans or the Department of Motor Vehicles perhaps for a truck weighing station)."

Commuters made it clear this week that they want the buildings to remain rest areas.

About 200 people over two days had written their names on a sign-in sheet regularly displayed at the front counter of the

(See Rest Areas, Page A8)



The St. Albans (Vt.) Messenger, Monday, Jan. 5, 2009

## LOCAL/VERMONT

# Welcome—

continued from page 1

states that some of the expenditure reductions call for closing visitor centers, including the one at about Feb. 15. Labounty was surprised that the Welcome Center made the list of proposed closures.

"As a part of entry, it would be hard to people to find out that they'd closed it. It's not about the count of people who come in, but the quality of what they get out of the visit," says Labounty.

She said travelers need a safe, clean place to use the restroom, get directions and stretch their legs.

"Sometimes it's an hour and a half away from the border and people don't have a break," she says.

with kids." Labounty said adding that during the summer and holidays, the wait at the border can be as long as three hours.

The Hightate Welcome Center is open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. 365 days a year.

The Welcome Center parking lot is plowed when snow falls, but Labounty, who works 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., comes in during the winter 45 minutes early to clear snow on the pathways with a snowblower and by shoveling.

The Welcome Center employs four people. There are two full-time people who cover the Monday-through-Friday hours, a permanent part-time person for

time person to fill in when other workers need a day off.

"If a sub can't come in, you've got to come in, this job requires a lot of dedication," said Labounty.

In 2007, almost 74,000 people visited the Welcome Center in Highgate. Labounty said 2008 figures will be close to that amount. She said that in August 2008, the rest stop had 15,954 visitors, an increase from 11,914 in 2007. Labounty attributed the increase in visitors this past August to the exchange rate.

The Welcome Center offers WiFi, toilets, including a handicapped restroom. Green

is free, but donations, including Canadian coins are accepted. All monies collected for the coffee goes back to the state. Laboury gives out free maps and displays 350 brochures on area attractions.

She generally sees people stop who are on their way to Stowe or Burlington and are looking for directions to shopping or the airport.

Laboury said the Welcome Center is more than just a rest stop. "It's a home away from home," she said.

On New Year's Eve, the Necak family, of

stopped at the Welcome Center. They had not heard the Center may be closed to cut costs.

"This is a very special stop. We drove an hour and a half and this was the first stop," said Goran Necak.

"We visit here every time we cross the border; at least two to three times a year, especially with this one," said his wife Valerka, mentioning to their six-year-old son, Vincent.

Mr. Necak said he did not know where he would stop if the Welcome Center was closed.

"We really prefer having this here. It's very convenient. When

Over her almost two decades at the Welcome Center, she has helped many who had car problems, those who were turned away from the border because they did not have proper documentation, even people who were made to depart from buses, helping them make contact with someone to pick them up.

Some of them had to hang out all day, so I started bringing food and hot chocolate in," she said of the times when people were denied access to Canada.

She had had babies as mothers traveling alone could use the restroom. She

asked if she has a microwave by parents looking to warm up a baby bottle or baby food

you get in (the U.S.) you need directions right away," he said.

headed to Mount Washington and

Mountain Coffee Roaster's coffee

weekends and a temporary part-

...и охоты, сарматскому народу

This past holiday week, she offered her counter for people to eat the lunches they packed. Labounty loves talking with people and helping them out in any way she can.

Asked why she is so generous, going beyond her assigned duties, "You have to put yourself in that person's position," Labounty explained.

Born in Canada, Labounty speaks French fluently, which is greatly appreciated by French speaking visitors looking for directions and information.

She said some who come through the door are frustrated especially when the weather is bad, Labounty offers them a coffee and a chance to relax.

"I love this job, I love working with the public. You get to meet a lot of people and different cultures," Labounty said.

Labounty worries what will happen to travelers if the Welcome Center is closed.

If it closes, the first choice travelers will have for a restroom is to take the Highgate Springs exit at which signs show facilities are available three miles away. That restroom is located at Martin's Store in Highgate Springs.

Martin's owner Gilbert Gagne said he had learned on television

around the holidays that the state had announced plans to close the Welcome Center. He said the Welcome Center is "pretty important" because once travelers leave Montreal there are no rest stops

before the border crossing, which he said could involve a 30-minute or four hour wait if there was a back-up at the border.

"It's a crying shame the first thing people would see is 'Welcome to Vermont,' and then have to search for restroom facilities, said Gagner.

He said it was possible if the Welcome Center closed he would see more traffic in his store, or the travelers would go to different areas.


"It might be positive, but it may overwhelm," said Gagner, noting that he only has two restrooms available and uses a traditional septic system. He said he does not have a policy that someone using his facilities have to make a purchase, but wondered what might happen, if as a result of state restrooms closing his septic failed. "Who would pay for that?" he asked.

Also, Martin's closes on Christmas Day and the store's restrooms are not handicapped accessible.

Nancy Paquette, owner of the My-T-Fine II restaurant in Highgate Springs said the Welcome Center should not be closed.

"Travelers need to have this. They've been good to me. If they're not there, we're going to lose," she said of the Welcome Center staff that has sent diners her way.

The other visitor centers that may be closed are Hartford North, Randolph North and Sharon South.


 Monday, Jan. 5, 2009  
**MESSENGER**

*Vermont's Oldest Evening Newspaper*

BERKSHIRE	MONTGOMERY	SHELDON	FAIRFIELD	HIGHGATE	RICHFORD	ENOSBURG	SWANTON	GEORGIA	FAIRFAX	FRANKLIN	RA
-----------	------------	---------	-----------	----------	----------	----------	---------	---------	---------	----------	----

'I love this job, I love working with the public.'

Johanne Labounty,  
Highgate Welcome Center

# Where will they stop?

Welcome Center at I-89, Highgate on chopping block

By VICKY SINAGRA  
 Messenger Correspondent

**H**IGHGATE — Johanne Labounty loves her job and is worried she is about to lose it.

Labounty, of Swanton, is the supervisor of the Vermont Welcome Center in Highgate. For 19 years, she has been the first person many have met after going through the border crossing into Vermont.

According to an e-mail Labounty received on Dec. 15, the Legislature and Gov. Jim Douglas' administration proposed budget cuts including the Vermont Information Centers Division.

▶ See *WELCOME* on page 8A

Above left, Marco Brelli of Montreal gets directions to Burlington before heading to First Night with his family. Johanne Labounty, left, is supervisor of Welcome Center in Highgate. Above, the Highgate Welcome Center is right next to the border for visitors arriving from Canada. Above inset, Goran Necak gets a complimentary cup of coffee at the welcome center.

150384 (2004) 25:150384