



## *Bennington County Regional Commission*

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February 12, 2026

Hon. Rep. Matt Walker, Chair  
House Transportation Committee  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Rep. Walker And House Transportation Committee Members:

During the Bennington County Regional Commission's (BCRC's) testimony to your committee on February 11, 2026, committee members asked that we follow up with details on our request that the committee consider amendments to Vermont's implementation of the National Historic Preservation Act.

As we noted, this process is a substantial burden at the scoping stage of new pedestrian and bicycle projects. Such review costs are typically 10-30% of the project scoping budget. The review also adds extra steps in project procurement, slows project completion, often for many months, saps project management capacity, and limits how many small-scale regional pedestrian and bicycle projects can be undertaken leading to less comprehensive understanding of key corridors. In our region these include Vermont Routes 7, 7A, 30, and 11. For example, a scoping study for a shared-use path along Route 30 in the Town of Dorset was delayed by 4 months due to this review, pushing the total completion time to nearly 2 years.

This will only be exacerbated by Act 181's requirements related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to serve areas that will help regions meet their housing targets.

Language to this effect was introduced in H.426 in 2025 as follows:

*Sec. 17. AMENDMENTS TO AGREEMENT RELATED TO REVIEW UNDER THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT*

*(a) The Agency of Transportation, in consultation with the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, shall seek to amend the Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation Regarding the Federal-Aid Highway Program in Vermont to categorize the creation of new bicycle and pedestrian facilities as either exempt activities, listed in Appendix A, or screened activities, listed in Appendix B.*

*(b) The Agency of Transportation shall provide a written update on its efforts pursuant to subsection (a) of this section to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation not later than November 15, 2025.*

As noted elsewhere in BCRC's testimony, we encourage the legislature to work with VTrans to streamline review procedures related to historic bridge repairs. We would encourage passage of legislative language along the lines of:

"The Agency of Transportation shall exempt repairs to covered bridges identified in bridge inspection reports that do not meaningfully alter the appearance or structural function of the bridge from review by the agency's Covered Bridge Committee and its Architectural Historian(s). This shall be interpreted to include like-for-like replacement of bridge members, and apply to all agency grants which fund bridge repairs."

In a period of strained transportation budgets, we stress the need to address all potential regulatory barriers that add cost and weaken implementation of transportation projects. BCRC, with politically diverse staff versed in many aspects of state regulation, is happy to serve as a resource for the House Transportation Committee on matters of regulatory relief, as called upon.

Nick Zaiac, Regional Planner

Mark Anders, Senior Transportation Planner