

# Downtown Transportation Fund



**Natalie Elvidge and Gary Holloway**  
Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

**House Committee on Transportation**  
February 5, 2026



# Downtown Transportation Fund

- The **Downtown Transportation Fund** assists municipalities in paying for **transportation-related capital improvements** within or serving a Designated Downtown.
- Investment in the **infrastructure of public spaces** stimulates private investment and creates a sense of identity and pride in Downtowns and Village Centers across Vermont.
- Since its **inception in 1999**, the program has invested over **\$17 million in Vermont's downtowns and villages**.



Vergennes Sidewalk Upgrades (2023 award)

# Downtown Designation Program

## 25 eligible designated downtowns

This community revitalization program is designed **to preserve the character** and **enhance the future** of medium to large sized historic centers by **incentivizing public and private investments, improving quality of life and encouraging economic development.** Municipalities that receive designation collaborate with local non-profit downtown organizations supporting efforts through funding, staff, partnerships and volunteers.





# Downtown Boundaries



Burlington



Bristol

# Downtown Transportation Fund

**Annual Appropriation:** \$523,966 (annual appropriation)

**Grant Maximum:** \$125k (required 20% match)

**Due:** Applications due February, awarded in April

**Timeline:** 24 months to start the project, 36 months to complete

**Source:** Transportation Funds

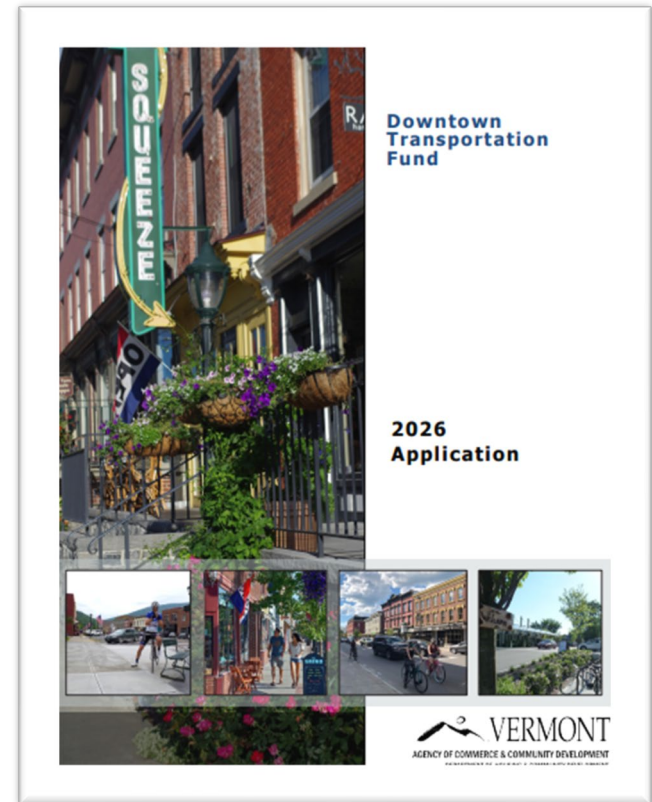
\*Note: There was a one time \$5M allocation in 2021 that expanded eligibility to include eligible Designated Village Centers





# Recent Updates

- In 2021, there had been a **\$5M allocation** to extend eligibility to Designated Village Centers that have completed a Better Connections plan (or comparable comprehensive planning process)
  - The \$5M has been used, and this cycle we will **only award the annual appropriation** to designated downtowns
- The 2026 competition is currently open, with **applications due on February 13th**



# Recent Updates

- As of December 31, 2025, the Community Investment Board (formerly the Downtown Board) is no longer the entity responsible for mapping and regulating the boundaries of designated areas. [Act 181 of 2024](#) **modified the designation program** so that mapping occurs on a regional level.
  - Mapping is ongoing, but we anticipate **5-6 new downtowns, putting additional pressure on the fund.**

# Downtown Transportation Fund

## Recent Cycles

| Year | Amount      | Communities Awarded |
|------|-------------|---------------------|
| 2025 | \$1,452,405 | 8                   |
| 2024 | \$1,715,585 | 11                  |
| 2023 | \$1,154,436 | 8                   |
| 2022 | \$2,098,094 | 15                  |

\*Note: There was a one time \$5M allocation in 2021 that expanded eligibility to include eligible Designated Village Centers





# 2025 Grant Awardees

| Year | Amount Requested                 | Awarded                     |
|------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2025 | 14 applications<br>(\$2,395,333) | 8 awardees<br>(\$1,452,405) |

- Brattleboro
- Burlington
- Essex Junction
- Hardwick
- Hinesburg
- Lyndon
- Montpelier
- Waterbury

# Common Project Examples

- Bicycle & pedestrian enhancements (*ex: sidewalks and crosswalks*)
- ADA modifications
- Streetscape improvements
- Parking facilities
- Rail or bus facilities
- Utility relocation
- Wayfinding signage
- Lighting improvements
- Safety improvements





# By the Numbers



## By the Numbers [2021-2025]



**48**  
projects awarded



**28**  
communities  
served



**\$6.9 m**  
in downtown  
transportation  
grants awarded



**\$7.5 m**  
leveraged with  
downtown  
transportation  
funds

# Project Highlights: Fairlee

- **Safety, Access, and Walkability**
  - Began with Better Connections Planning
  - The community identified gaps in **connecting people safely** and comfortably between the village, schools, residential areas, and nearby recreation
  - **2022 and 2023** Downtown Transportation Funding for **sidewalk, crosswalk and signage upgrades**

Department of Housing and Community Development



Walkway installed in Fairlee's Village Green

## Planning Today for a More Connected Village Tomorrow

### Improving Safety, Access, and Walkability in Fairlee's Village

Fairlee is a small Upper Valley town known for its historic village center, strong sense of community, and proximity to Lake Morey and other recreational destinations. While these assets contribute to Fairlee's character and quality of life, the town has long faced challenges connecting people safely and comfortably between the village, schools, residential areas, and nearby recreation. Through support from a Better Connections Grant, Fairlee took an important first step toward addressing these challenges, launching a community-based planning effort that positioned the town to secure Downtown Transportation Fund support for pedestrian improvements in the village center.

### Challenges

Fairlee's village is compact and walkable in scale, yet gaps in sidewalks and limited crossing improvements along key corridors made it difficult for residents and visitors to move around safely. Community members consistently identified concerns about walkability, particularly for routes connecting everyday destinations - such as shops, residences, and schools - with nearby recreational assets.

Town leaders recognized that addressing these issues would require more than isolated projects. Instead, they saw the need for a shared vision that could guide future safety, mobility, and community goals.

VERMONT





# Project Highlights: Springfield

- **Springfield Comtu Falls**
  - Began with Better Connections Planning
  - The community identified a **neglected building and considered the creation of a new community space**
  - Using **Downtown Transportation Funding**, Springfield transformed this lot into a **vibrant, accessible, useful park**

Department of Housing and Community Development



Springfield Comtu Cascade Park

## When Planning Leads to Action

### Better Connections and Downtown Transportation Funds Spark Downtown Revitalization in Springfield

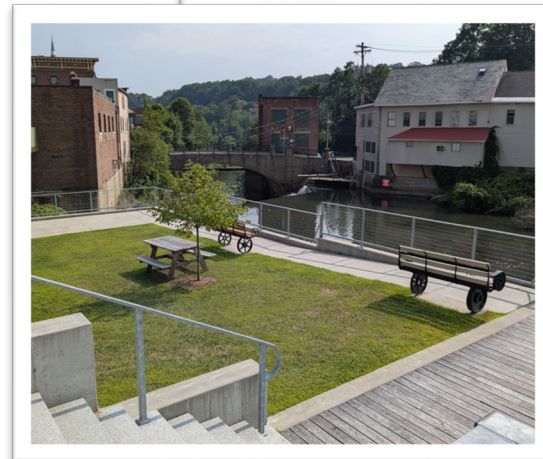
Through the Better Connections Grant Program, the Town of Springfield launched a community-driven planning effort to better align land use and transportation and establish a clear vision for downtown revitalization. That work laid the foundation for implementation through the Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF) and other sources, allowing the Town to move from ideas to action. Together, the programs supported the transformation of a long-neglected downtown site into Comtu Cascade Park, a welcoming public space that reconnects the community to the Black River and supports broader downtown investment.

#### Challenges

Springfield's downtown is located along the Black River, one of the community's greatest assets. For years, however, deteriorated buildings along the Main Street corridor blocked access to the river while detracting from the surrounding streetscape. Community members and local leaders recognized that revitalizing this site could have a significant impact on downtown vitality, but doing so required coordinated planning, broad support, and strategic investment. There was a shared desire to create public space, improve pedestrian circulation, and reconnect the village to the river as part of a larger effort to strengthen downtown connections and access to nearby schools.

#### Impact and Benefits

The Better Connections planning process enabled Springfield to take a holistic look at land use, transportation, and public space. Community engagement and visualization



# Springfield, Comtu Falls (before)





# Springfield, Comtu Falls (after)





# St. Albans



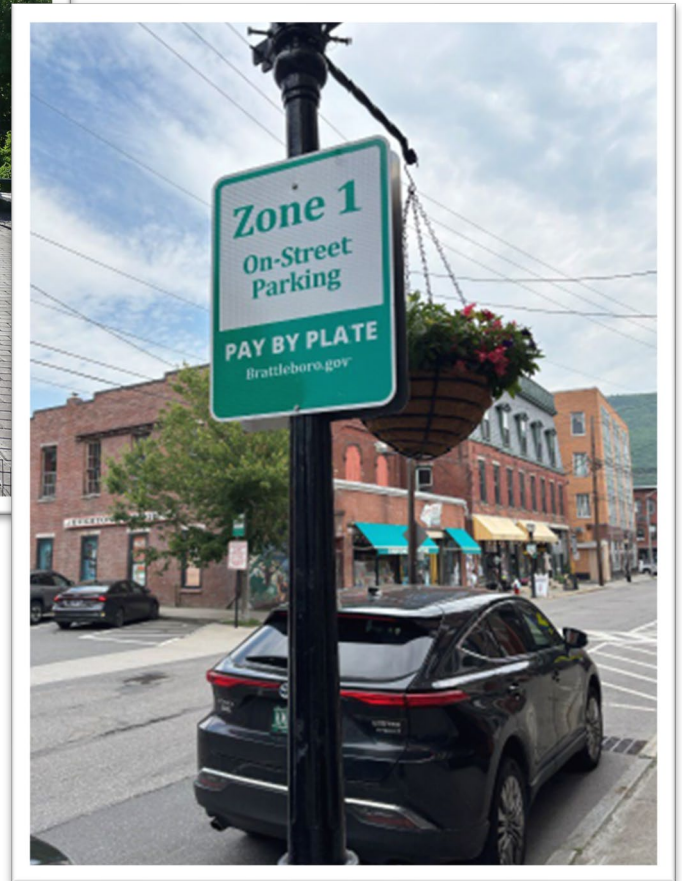


# Bristol





# Brattleboro





# Poultney





# Rutland





# Chester





# Supporting Safe and Vibrant Downtowns and Villages





**Thank You**



**Natalie Elvidge and Gary Holloway**