



## Regional Planning Commissions Overview

*Presented to:*

House Committee on  
Transportation

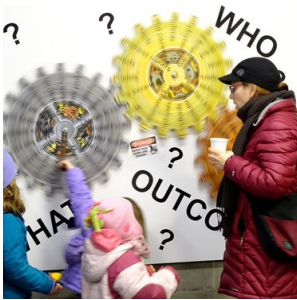
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# Outline

1. Introduction
2. Accountability
3. Funding
4. State Policy
5. 2024 Housing/Act 250 bill (Act 181) Implementation
6. RPC Programs
7. TPI Program
8. Issues of Interest to RPCs



**Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) provide staff support and technical assistance to towns and the State.**



In the absence of county government, RPCs play a critical role in connecting towns with federal and state programs and dollars, managing projects, as well as a forum for towns to discuss issues of mutual interest.

RPCs are political subdivisions of the State of Vermont, uniquely positioned to provide broad services to every Vermont municipality.



**TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING**



**LAND USE  
PLANNING**



**AND TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE IN  
ALL AREAS**



**WATER  
QUALITY**



**HAZARD MITIGATION &  
PREPAREDNESS**



**HOUSING**



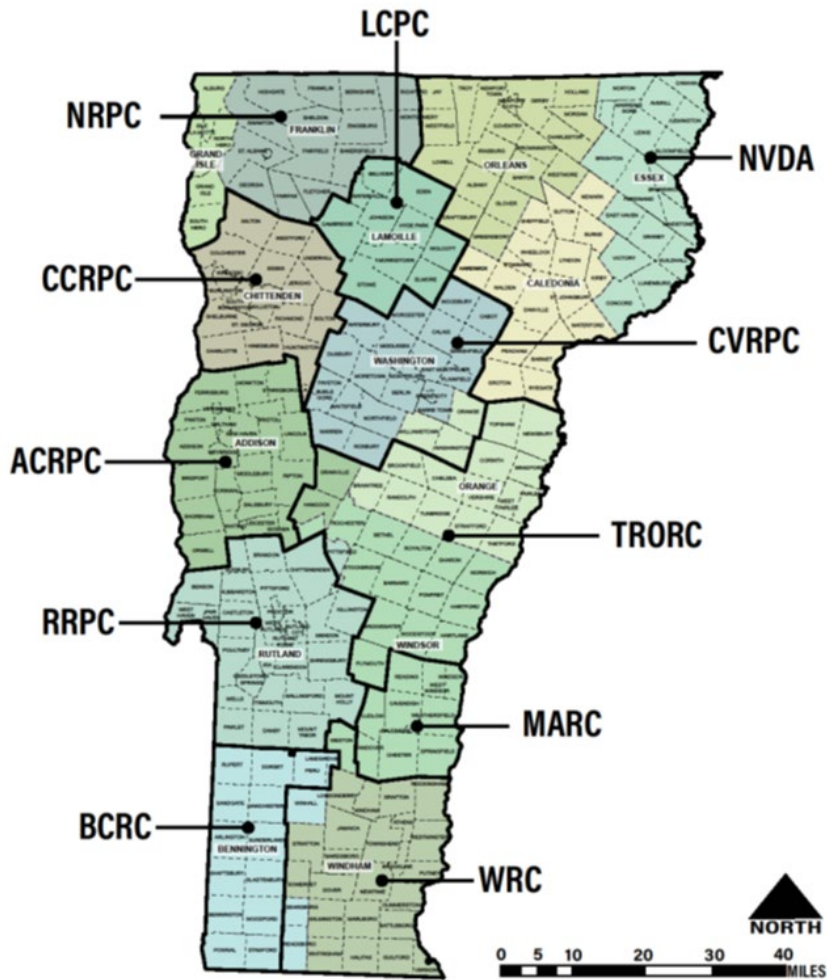
**BROWNFIELD  
ASSESSMENT &  
REMEDICATION**



**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**



**ENERGY  
PLANNING**



**STATE OF VERMONT  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS**

# Quick Facts / FY24 Highlights



Vermont has **11** RPCs and **135** staff serving all 282 Vermont's towns (237), cities (10), villages (35), plus gores.



In FY24, **113** communities received grant writing assistance from their RPCs, reducing the burden on limited town staff & providing funding for locally needed projects.



*Visit [VAPDA.org](http://VAPDA.org) for more information about each RPC in VT*



# Governance



Towns appoint representatives to each RPC Board. RPCs work for member towns.



RPC Boards approve budgets and set policy and program priorities, including regional plans.



Executive Committees of each RPC board are responsible for the oversight of the Executive Director.



Each RPC has committees to assist the RPC Board. Typical are Transportation, Permit/Regulatory, Regional Plan, Clean Water, Brownfield, etc.

# Funding



RPCs have no general tax revenue. All revenue comes from state and federal grants with limited town dues.

RPCs operate as public sector consulting staff for member towns and state agencies – every hour of work gets billed to specific performance agreements.



## MUNICIPALITIES

### REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSIONS

#### GRANT FUNDERS:

ACCD, VTrans, ANR, VEM, AOA, BGS, DPS, VDH, USDA, EDA, EPA, USDOT, NBRC, town dues





# State Policy and Implementation

RPCs provide on-the-ground expertise on town and regional issues to the state in policy deliberations and implementation.



RPCs are a direct link between towns and state government and are often called upon to support policy development and implementation in the areas of housing, energy, transportation, water quality, and more.



RPC Directors and senior staff are often asked to serve on state councils and boards and are frequently called upon by state agencies to develop and implement statutorily-mandated programs with our member municipalities.





# 2024 Housing/Act 250 bill (Act 181) Implementation

1. Interim exemptions are in place. See map.
2. RPCs developed regional plan future land use guidance 12/2024 and provided training with NRB and DHCD.
3. Meetings with towns have started and will align town, regional, and state plans and permitting .
4. RPCs are on schedule for all 11 regional plans to be updated by December 2026:



2025 Summer - NVDA  
2025 Fall - CVRPC, NRPC  
2026 Spring - ACRPC, BCRC, RRPC, WRC, CCRPC,  
LCPC  
2026 Summer - MARC  
2026 Fall - TRORC

# Planning, Zoning, & Mapping



In FY24, RPCs provided **188** towns with planning and bylaw assistance.

**180** towns received mapping services from Regional Planning Commissions in FY24, assisting in a variety of municipal operations and plans.

Maintaining clear and up-to-date plans and bylaws creates a strong, guiding vision for communities. This clear vision ensures smooth permitting at state and local levels and supports housing and job growth.



240 municipalities have municipal plans  
207 municipalities have zoning bylaws  
37 municipalities only have flood bylaws  
17 municipalities have no bylaws



# Housing



In FY24, RPCs provided **94** towns with assistance to increase housing.

Some of these efforts were to update zoning to support increased densities in our centers.

Others were to provide guidance to property owners on ADUs and other infill housing.



Rutland RPC produced a Housing Resource Guide combining 50 resources from 15 organizations into a single, accessible document. It helps users with project management, funding, permit compliance, and more by providing toolkits, data, and online resources.

# Housing

To produce more housing, more state policy changes are needed:



1. Making more funding/financing available to towns and/or developers for infrastructure.
2. The risk from permit appeals needs to be reduced, especially in Tier 1B Act 250 exemption areas.
3. Review other state permits beyond Act 250 (DEC, SHPO, etc.) to see how they should be modified to support housing & job growth.





# Economic and Community Development



**126** towns received economic development assistance from their RPCs in FY24, strengthening local economies.

Strong local economies arise from comprehensive land-use planning and united development efforts.

RPCs help build town infrastructure and guide development patterns to provide the foundation and public support for private economic development.



Working with the small rural Town of Albany and a motivated group of local citizens, **NVDA** assisted the Town to develop their first ever Town Plan and create a Designated Village Center. Then, utilizing VT Tax Credits and NVDA EPA Assessment funds, a long vacant and blighted former gas station was transformed into the new Albany General Store – now a vibrant community hub.



# Brownfields



**55** towns were able to assess or remediate polluted land with the support of RPCs in FY24.

By assessing, remediating, and reinvesting in these properties with the help of RPCs, communities can achieve a variety of **benefits** :

 INCREASE LOCAL TAX BASES

 EXPAND LOCAL HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY STOCK

 IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

 ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

 CREATE JOBS



After helping the Town of St. Johnsbury to create its first Neighborhood Designated Area, **NVDA** and the Town are using their EPA Assessment and Cleanup funds to redevelop a former industrial site to create new housing. The Town, NVDA, and a developer of Mass Timber housing will create approximately 30-35 new units on the 8-acre parcel.



## Clean Water



**204** towns took steps to improve their water quality in FY24 with assistance from RPCs.

Many of these improvements resulted from RPC assistance in the *Municipal Roads Grants -in-Aid Program* through the Vermont Agency of Transportation.



ACRPC used DEC funding for Vermont Family Forests to reduce erosion control from forest roads at the Bristol Town Forest on Seth Hill in Lincoln. The project led to a reduction of 14.9kg/year of Phosphorus entering our waterways.



# Energy Planning & Implementation



With assistance from RPCs, **228** towns developed comprehensive energy plans.

With a focus on sustainability and affordability, Vermont towns face significant roadblocks and opportunities in the clean energy transition. RPCs assist communities by helping develop comprehensive local and regional energy plans that integrate land use, transportation, natural resources, and energy project implementation.

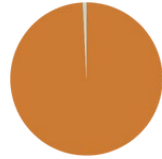


In coordination with the Department of Buildings and General Services, the RPCs have supported the **Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP)**, which has provided energy capacity building mini grants to **176** municipalities, free energy assessments on over **600** municipal buildings, and awarded \$35.9 million in implementation funding to 126 municipalities.





# Emergency Planning and Response




With technical assistance from RPCs, **260** towns were able to improve their emergency preparedness and work to mitigate damage from disasters.

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management. Through partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, VTrans, and the Agency of Natural Resources, RPCs assist towns by:

 PROVIDING STAFF TO THE STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

 SUPPORTING LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTORS

 ASSISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS

 UPDATING FLOODPLAIN AND RIVER CORRIDOR BYLAWS AND HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS REQUIRED BY FEMA

 ASSISTING MUNICIPALITIES DURING AND AFTER DISASTER EVENTS

 ...AND MORE



# Partnerships

## RPCs support numerous collaborative efforts.

- RPCs work with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy & Economic Development Districts.
- RPCs provided initial start-up and some continuing support for Communication Union Districts to provide broadband statewide.
- RPCs are serving as Clean Water Service Providers in the Lake Champlain basin to help achieve clean water goals.
- RPCs also support other collaboratives around public safety, energy, and other issues as needed with our municipalities.
- RPCs are one of the few entities that stay engaged for the months and years it takes to move a project from concept to implementation. Towns rely on us for this continuity and staff support.



TRORC, in partnership with the AOA, VLCT and all 11 RPCs, is managing the **Municipal Technical Assistance Program** to provide staff capacity to the most rural towns to ensure they have access to all state and federal grant opportunities for housing, disaster response and infrastructure that our larger, fully staffed towns already possess. This targeted support has been instrumental in securing funding that would not have otherwise been available to these towns.



# Transportation Planning



RPCs provided **211** towns with technical assistance in transportation, including:



TRAFFIC  
COUNTS



CULVERT  
INVENTORIES



ROAD EROSION  
INVENTORIES



A VARIETY OF OTHER  
SUPPORT SERVICES

RPCs help coordinate the **Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)** with VTrans, a statewide initiative for public involvement in improvements to Vermont's transportation system and for the development of region-wide transportation plans.



Northwest RPC and the Northwest VT Rail Trail Council launched a new interactive map for the Missisquoi and the Lamoille Valley Rail Trails. The interactive map features Trail Friendly Businesses in towns that border the trails, and amenities along the trail. To check out the new interactive map, visit <https://www.mvrailtrail.org/>

## Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI)

The TPI program's mission is to enhance cooperative decision-making among state, regional, and local partners about the transportation system. It has **five main objectives**, each covering a variety of projects:

1

Enhance cooperation and coordination between VTrans, RPCs and municipalities

2

Better connect federal, regional and statewide transportation planning

3

Provide technical assistance to municipalities

4

Advance VTrans strategic and long-term transportation plans

5

Provide a mechanism for improved public outreach and education

Here are a few highlights from FY24:



230

Municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning



125

RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans



114

Municipalities assisted with transportation related grants



64

Municipal transportation inventories conducted



73%

Percentage of budget spent on municipal technical assistance

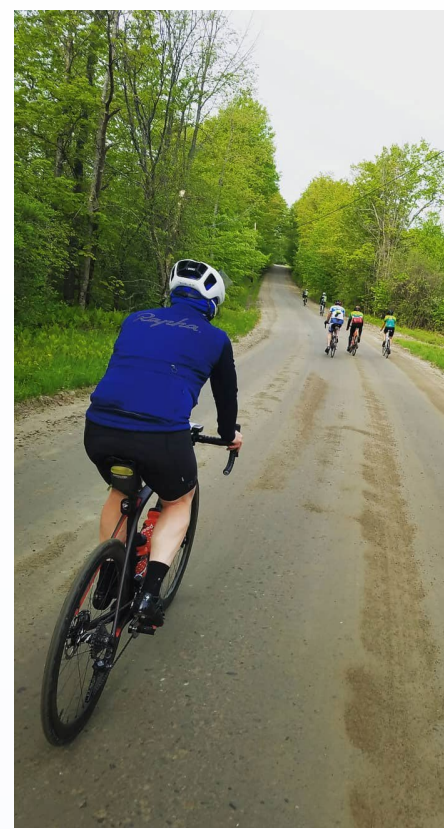


418

Data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans

# Issues of Interest to RPCs

- Study of barriers for local bicycle and pedestrian projects
- Bicycle and pedestrian project funding
- Easiest way to get Better Roads Category A funding to municipalities for road erosion inventories
- Payback for cancellation of locally managed projects





**Thank you!**

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For more information, visit: **VAPDA.org**