



Town of Bethel, Vermont

Incorporated
1779

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Hello, I am Therese Kirby the Town Manager for the Town of Bethel. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today.

Bethel has 88 miles of road, of which we maintain approximately 68 miles. Of those 68 miles, 11 is paved and 57 is gravel. We maintain this with one full-time Road Foreman and two full-time road crew members. We hire seasonal employees for plowing, as we have been unable to fill another full-time position for the last few years. As Town Manager, I am also the Road Commissioner.

Vermont has approximately 14,000 miles of public roads, with only 20% managed as State Highways, and 80% managed by Town's. That leaves small Town's like Bethel, to bear the financial burden of maintaining not only the roads, but bridges and culverts. With 10.4% of Bethel's population living below the poverty level, that makes infrastructure dollars even harder to come by.

Maintaining infrastructure is not just about the increased cost of materials, fuel and manpower, it is also about the increased cost of equipment. In 2021 we purchased a new Western Star plow truck for \$198,095, in 2023 we purchased another for \$259,020 and in 2026 another Western Star is costing us \$329,798. That is a 66.48% increase in cost of a similar truck in just five (5) years.

My example for you today is Camp Brook Road. This road connects Bethel and Rochester and is used as a main commuter route for people working in Randolph, White River, etc. It is also regularly used by White River Valley Ambulance.

Camp Brook Road is a Class 2 Town Highway in Bethel of which we maintain 6.11 miles.

Bethel receives \$57,147 in Class 2 State Highway Aid or \$ 4,786 per mile, per year.

For Camp Brook Road, that equates to \$28,716 per year in State Highway Aid.

From July of 2025 to April 15, 2026 Bethel has spent:

Materials (Salt & chloride): \$25,780

Vehicle gas/repairs/tires: \$16,796

Labor/benefits: \$19,872

Patching material: \$3,918

Total: \$66,366

We currently have a paving project out to bid. We did not receive a paving grant, as Bethel is in a six-to-seven-year rotation until we can hope to receive one. So, we are spending \$355,000 to \$400,000 out of our capital road fund, hoping to get .90 miles paved, but due to the increase in paving costs, we are unsure of the final distance. This will reduce our capital road fund by 48%.

After reviewing the document from January 9, 2026 created by Logan Mooberry on the Transportation Fund, I think the entire Motor Vehicle Purchase and Use Tax should go to the transportation fund, instead of sending 1/3 to the education fund. The document stated the Purchase & Use Tax would generate \$148.9 M in 2026, with \$99.3 M going to transportation and \$49.6 M going to the education fund. Since there is \$166 M of federal transportation money available that you need to find a \$33 M dollar match for, this seems like a possible answer to not only the current funding issue, but future funding issues.

I also believe the legislature should adjust the Local Option Tax (LOT) withholding formula, so a higher percentage of that money stays in the local communities that have adopted the LOT, and they should return future surplus revenues to municipalities as *new* appropriations – not as replacement revenue to fund the state's current obligations for fees and payments related to reappraisal.

Thank you.