

**Testimony Before the Senate Economic Development Committee  
Regarding S-287 and Vermont Route 22A  
Wednesday, March 10, 2026**

**Roy Newton, Publisher**

Chair and members of the Senate Economic Development Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to provide testimony regarding S-287 and legislative action concerning Vermont Route 22A. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Senator Dave Weeks for inviting me to share my perspective on this matter and to Chair Alison Clarkson for the opportunity to speak before this committee. I appear before you as an independent Vermont publisher who has spent decades documenting the life, economy, and infrastructure of our communities.

My view comes from nearly four decades in Vermont journalism. I began publishing in 1987 with *Vermont Ski News*, a statewide print media dedicated to covering the ski industry and mountain communities throughout the state. That work required extensive travel across Vermont's roadways and frequent reporting on the infrastructure and transportation corridors that connect our towns, tourism economy, and rural regions, and in particular the ski routes. Many of those ski routes have been upgraded including VT-103 from Rutland to Bellows Falls; nearly every mile of that winding mountainous road has been reconstructed in recent decades.

In 1996, I launched *The Brandon-Pittsford Reporter*, a community newspaper serving towns along the Route 7 corridor and surrounding areas. I published both *Vermont Ski News* and *The Reporter* until 2005. That same year, I founded *Lakeside News & The Rutland Sun*, which today many readers know as **The Weekly of Rutland County**. Through this weekly publication, I have continued to cover regional issues affecting Rutland County and at times Addison County to the north as well as issues of statewide importance.

In addition to publishing, I also founded the Vermont Ski Museum in 1988 in my hometown of Middlebury. The museum later moved to Brandon and ultimately to its present home in Stowe, Vermont. That project, like my newspapers, was founded on the belief that documenting Vermont's stories, through its industries, landscapes, and people, is vital to the state's long-term economic health and our culture.

During my years as a publisher, I have traveled virtually every major roadway in Vermont. Covering communities requires driving them again and again through all seasons. As a result, I have not only seen the state's transportation network from the perspective of a reporter but also from the perspective of the residents, commuters, farmers, and truck drivers who rely upon them every day.

While publishing *The Brandon-Pittsford Reporter*, I also served on a steering committee addressing transportation issues and the reconstruction of U.S. Route 7. The committee was formed in the wake of a family of four dying just south of Brandon on their way home from a basketball tournament. The car collided with a tandem Cabot Creamery tractor trailer and a third vehicle. In that role, and through reporting in the newspaper, I observed firsthand how sustained collaboration between communities, state officials, and transportation planners can bring meaningful attention to highway safety and lead to action on infrastructure concerns.

During that same period I also covered a specific roadway safety problem that illustrates how practical engineering solutions can make an immediate difference. On Route 73 on the way to Neshobe Golf Course from Brandon Village, a sharp curve had developed a dangerous reputation. A steep rock ledge rose directly to the edge of the pavement, creating a blind corner for drivers traveling in either direction. Accidents occurred there on a weekly basis.

After reporting on those crashes regularly in *The Reporter*, it became clear that the problem was not driver behavior but the design of the roadway itself. I put forth a solution to blast the ledge back several feet to increase visibility around the corner. Once the blast took place, it substantially improved the line of sight. The result was immediate: the rate of accidents dropped significantly. That experience reinforced an important lesson that applies to our discussion today—thoughtful engineering improvements with direct feedback from the public can dramatically improve roadway safety.

Since launching *Lakeside News & The Rutland Sun* in 2005, my newspaper has covered infrastructure challenges across western Vermont. In addition to reporting news, it has provided space for members of the public to share their views through letters, commentary, and discussion both in print and on social media.

Among all the infrastructure issues *Lakeside News* has covered, none has been as persistent, as troubling, or as urgent as conditions along Vermont Route 22A. This corridor runs through both Rutland County, Vermont and Addison County, Vermont, serving as a vital north-south route for commercial trucking, agriculture, and daily commuters, as well as visitors traveling through our state.

One of the most important facts to understand about Route 22A is the physical nature of the roadway itself. Much of the highway is narrow and lacks meaningful shoulders. When two eighteen-wheel tractor-trailers approach each other from opposite directions, the drivers are concentrating simply on leaving enough space between them to pass safely. In many places their tires are already riding the outside white line with only inches to spare—not feet—before the edge of the pavement drops into a ditch or a ravine.

In numerous locations along the corridor, that drop-off is steep. A moment's misjudgment, a patch of ice, a newly formed frost heave, or a sudden evasive maneuver can send a truck or passenger vehicle off the road, sometimes causing it to overturn. These conditions are not hypothetical, it is the reality that drivers face every day on Route 22A.

Over the years the newsroom has documented accident after accident along Route 22A. The pages I have provided to the committee show just a fraction of that record. In one recent edition of *The Weekly of Rutland County*, we reported that crashes continue to occur with troubling regularity, some involving passenger vehicles, others involving tractor-trailers that struggle with the narrow roadway, limited recovery space, and difficult winter conditions along the corridor.

My reporting has also shown the pattern visually. Photographs from incidents in Benson, Orwell, Shoreham, Bridport, and West Haven show vehicles overturned, trucks sliding into ditches, and emergency responders working along narrow stretches of roadway. It shows families standing beside an overturned car waiting for rescue units as vehicles pass by with no margin to give. In one case a tractor-trailer was literally swallowed by the roadside swamp along the corridor. These are not

isolated events; they are a continuing pattern that has persisted for years.

In February 2026, the newspaper again reported on two serious crashes occurring within days of one another. One involving a box truck striking an SUV and another sending five people to the hospital after a car left the roadway. Those incidents were not unusual for Route 22A. They were simply the latest in a long sequence the newspaper has documented over time.

More troubling still is the data. A colleague in the Vermont House recently shared figures indicating that more than **250 reported accidents have occurred along Route 22A in the past four years alone**. Behind those numbers are injuries, property damage, economic disruption, and a constant strain on local emergency responders.

The firefighters, rescue squads, police officers, and tow operators in these communities respond without fail to incidents along this highway. For towns such as Benson, Orwell, and others, Route 22A has become a recurring site of emergency response and recovery that places pressure on already limited local resources.

From a publisher's perspective, the most difficult reality to report on has been the lack of action. The stories accumulate year after year. The headlines change dates, but the problem remains the same. The tragic narrative of Route 22A is not merely the accidents themselves, it is that the corridor has not yet received the focused, coordinated response that its record demands.

In my view, significant portions of the roadway need to be rebuilt from the base upward. Route 22A runs in a relatively straight line with little elevation change from West Haven at the end of Long Hill north to Bridport. Compared with many Vermont highways, there is relatively little interference from buildings along much of the corridor. For that reason, the engineering challenges are manageable and the opportunity for reconstruction is realistic.

Rutland County is fortunate to have construction companies with proven capabilities. In the wake of recent flooding events across Vermont, companies such as Casella, Markowski, and Fabian have demonstrated their ability to rebuild damaged highways quickly and effectively. These firms are ready for the call.

There are also specific locations along the corridor where targeted improvements could significantly reduce accidents. In Benson, the Country Store and the junction with Route 144 have been the site of numerous crashes. The roadway at that point needs redesign and speed reduction to 40mph for that area. Curbing may need to be established on both the Route 144 side and the Route 22A side so drivers clearly understand where to enter and exit, both the intersection and the store.

Just north of the store there is a wetland area, and it may require an exemption to use a portion of that land, a few feet strip of land, for the public good. There are certainly challenges at this location, but with proper negotiations with the landowners and diligence by the state, those problems could be solved. If a negotiator is required, then so be it, get the job done.

Another location that deserves attention is the junction of Route 73 and Route 22A in Orwell just outside the village. This intersection serves as an important connector in the region and is in clear need of upgrading as part of a 22A safety strategy.

With this testimony, I would respectfully offer three recommendations for the committee's consideration as it evaluates S-287 and future legislation.

**First**, the State of Vermont should coordinate direct meetings with landowners along the Route 22A corridor to discuss potential improvements to the roadway, including the widening of shoulders and the creation of emergency pull-off areas and fair compensation in areas that are determined to require added space. If these improvements require additional right-of-way, the process must include fair and transparent compensation discussions with property owners so that safety improvements can move forward with community support and buy-in.

**Second**, the state should commit to a comprehensive engineering effort to improve the design of the corridor as a state byway while prioritizing safety. That effort should examine roadway width, shoulder conditions, drainage, winter resilience measures, truck traffic patterns, and other design elements that influence crash risk. Route 22A should be treated as a priority safety corridor requiring thoughtful redesign rather than piecemeal fixes.

**Third**, the legislature should establish a Vermont Route 22A Commission tasked with producing a detailed public report on the corridor. Such a commission should gather data on economic impacts, accident statistics, injuries, emergency response burdens, and freight traffic patterns. While federal designations may play a role in long-term funding strategies, the commission should also focus on identifying practical near-term solutions that can be implemented by the state ahead of a process that can take decades.

If necessary, I would encourage the legislature to consider introducing a separate bill to create such a commission and to ensure that its work remains focused on outcomes rather than indefinite study.

In closing, I thank the committee for the opportunity to share these observations. As a publisher who has spent decades documenting Vermont's communities, I believe Route 22A represents both a challenge and an opportunity. With thoughtful action, collaboration, and a clear focus on safety for Vermonters, the state can transform this corridor from one defined by recurring accidents into one defined by responsible planning and short-term infrastructure improvement with your support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.





# When will the first shovel be turned for 22A?

11/5/25

EDITORIAL By ROY NEWTON, Publisher



In light of another big rig rollover on Vermont Route 22A last Thursday, a reprint of an editorial from March 31, 2023 is reprinted for readers reference.

On pages 18 and 19 there is a recap of some of the accidents on 22A for your reference.

Below is the grandiose photo of the bike bath in South Burlington over the Interstate. It was proposed back in 2021 and it is almost ready to kick in. One might assume Senators Sanders and Welch had something to do with the Federal funding.

Meanwhile, down here in Rutland County nothing is done about 22A.

A Trooper once said to this reporter that "22A is the most dangerous road in the State of Vermont." He is correct, and nothing happens.

When will the first shovel be turned?

**March 31, 2023**

## **Route 22A Requires Urgent State Action**



Last week there was another serious accident on Route 22A in the Town of Orwell. The fatal accidents and serious injuries on the heavily travelled corridor continues.

According to Rep. Robert Helm, solutions are in the works. The State of Vermont needs to improve this road before more lives are taken, families devastated and destroyed.

The evidence is very clear and has been for a long time. In the photo above taken last week, two trucks one coming onto the widened straight of road, while the other one heads north onto the narrow stretch of road which continues untouched until you arrive 25 miles to the north.

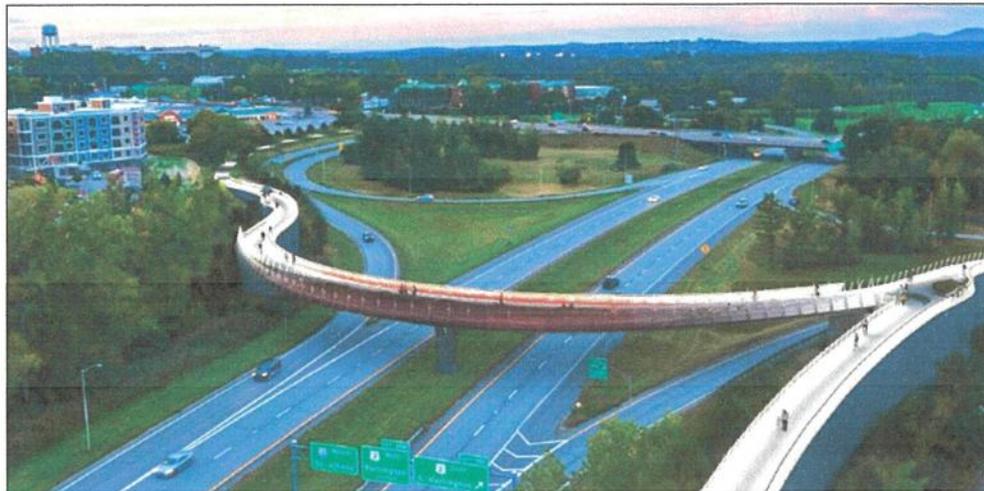
Why was reconstruction ever stopped many years ago? This is a major highway for western Vermont for delivery trucks of all kinds, workers going back and forth to work, and commuter students. Kids on school buses headed to the classroom and visitors seeking to get to their destination point.

That Route 22A is a deadly

highway has long been a foregone conclusion. State Troopers blaring sirens to get to the scene to find people dead, some still trapped in their vehicles. Rescue squad arriving with the Jaws of Life, Ambulances arriving, helicopters in route to carry away battered people with injuries to medical centers. How many more times do we need to have this happen before a serious reengineering takes place?

On March 23, 2021, at around 9:25AM, troopers responded to the report of a motor vehicle crash at 635 Rte. 22A in Orwell, Vermont. Trooper Craig Hanson in his report stated: "[A victim] was extricated from his vehicle and airlifted to UVM Medical Center for treatment of serious injuries."

Governor, this an issue that calls for urgent attention and action. Reconstruction needs to start immediately. Re-direct resources as needed to bring an end to preventable and repeat accidents on Route 22A in Rutland and Addison Counties.



In November 2021, the City of South Burlington received notice of a RAISE grant from the U.S. Office of the Secretary of Transportation for \$9.76 million to build the project! This enabled the City to move forward with design with support from the VTrans Municipal Assistance Services office and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). These funds have been obligated for construction.



## Weekend accidents mar 22A



Vehicle on roadside damaged in Bridport, VT, Sunday afternoon, March 9, 2025. No police report filed as of press time.

**BENSON** – On Thursday, March 6, 2025, an accident took place on Vermont Route 22A in the Town of Benson involving three vehicles, adding to the highway's ongoing safety concerns.

The crash occurred around 8 p.m. just south of Trinity Farm, a location accidents in the past. Due to heavy truck traffic in the area, it was difficult for reporters to reach the scene in the stopped traffic. The Vermont State Police were on hand to manage the situation and conduct an investigation.

Route 22A has long been considered a hazardous roadway, with multiple accidents occurring in the same stretch of road.

As the investigation into this latest accident continues, the Vermont

State Police are expected to release further details in the coming hours.

### VERMONT STATE POLICE SUMMARY

On March 6, 2025, at approximately 1923, Troopers from the Vermont State Police – Rutland Barracks, responded to a three-vehicle crash on VT RT 22a in the area of East Road in the Town of Benson. Through investigation, it was determined Operator #1 (Peilort), was operating Vehicle #1, traveling southbound on VT RT 22a. Operator #1 (Peilort) attempted to pass a vehicle also traveling southbound. Vehicle #1 was unable to safely pass and then attempted to reenter the southbound lane. Operator #1 (Peilort) lost control of

SEE PAGE 11

# Safety horrors of Route 22A

EDITORIAL BY ROY NEWTON, Publisher

*Is this all they could do?*

Just after the big truck passed, up comes a school bus headed north. Mantelizer won't do anything about the road, so you say what? I say come fall the Vermont State Police, Castleton Police, the Sheriff's Department and Fair Haven Police Department should co-ordinate and provide a escort of the school buses with blue lights shining everyday of the school year to slow down traffic and get the kids to school safely. It can be done, should be done and parents you should demand nothing

less for the safety of your kids. Meanwhile, up the road on 22A a new BUMP was put up. Is this all the could do? It is more than a BUMP, it is a snailhole. Just look at the photo, you can see how much the road has sunk. Even the white line is sagged along with the road. Further up the road in Shoreham, evidently a truck when off the road and mechanics are out to contain this spill, maybe gas or oil or who knows, I did not see any report on it. The trap laid out side of the road sure looks like

Yes, Bn. 22A was the scene of another accident last week. Probably looking for a view of the Adirondacks so one driver commented he fits to do when travelling up 22A. Now that is a bright statement to make when you are supposed to watching where you going on the road. Stop to take a phone call off 22A last week and before I left took a photo of



On and on, so goes the record books 22A another disaster in waiting.

this big rig. Look at that sucker fully 4 rows of heavy logs loaded on a truck with 22 wheels. Did not even know that they had 22 wheels. Impressive you might odd, but that's what you have going up and down this highway everyday. The road was never built for this type of commerce. A guy asked last week what I would do. You don't build a house with a weak foundation. That is the problem with the road. There is no foundation under all the pavement. It needs to be torn up and lay down a foundation suitable to carrying this kind of a load.



No 'bed of roses'

