



TOWN OF ROYALTON

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Statement of Ryan Britch
Royalton Town Administrator
before the
Senate Committee on Transportation
On
December 18, 2025

Chairman Westman, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brennan, and distinguished members of the Committee. On behalf of the Town of Royalton, thank you for your attention to the VTrans funding shortfall, the potential impact on Vermont towns, and for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

In recent years, Royalton has been the fortunate recipient of VTrans funding. A Class II Paving Grant helped our town afford the reconstruction of our North Road. Grants in Aid funding allowed our highway crew to improve water management and erosion control through multiple ditching projects on back roads. An emergency grant enabled us to repair bridge abutments after the July 2023 flood. Without these critical funds our town would have been unable to afford these critical repairs.

Today, lingering pandemic-related supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, tariffs, and the increased cost of production and trucking have caused the cost of construction to increase dramatically over the last five years. Prices for hot-rolled steel have surged 90%, concrete 40%, and asphalt over 25%. Fiscal analysts have estimated that total construction costs have increased 62% in Vermont since 2020. Now more than ever before, Vermont towns are reliant on state funds to help repair our crumbling and aging infrastructure.

Royalton has experienced the consequences of these rising costs firsthand. In 2020, Royalton was awarded a VTrans Bike and Pedestrian Grant of \$904,000 to reconstruct the South Royalton Village Sidewalk. In the time it took for engineers to design the project, receive National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) approval, and clear right-of-way, our estimated project costs increased from \$1.1 million to over \$2.5 million. Even accounting for the \$500,000 in matching funds that the town has already raised, we have a \$1.3 million shortfall. Royalton is hoping to apply for and receive an enhancement grant, but given the VTrans budget shortfall, the guarantee of additional funds is uncertain.

VTrans is also facing the same pressures of rising construction costs and decreasing gas tax revenue. Difficult decisions must be made, and state officials have already begun discussing potential cuts and cost saving measures such as transportation project delays. The two publicly announced project delays in Rutland and Springfield are likely just the tip of the iceberg and that is why I am before you today. To state that it is imperative to fully fund core VTrans projects and specifically the maintenance and repair of town bridges.

Royalton Bridge #30, commonly known as Foxstand Bridge, is a town-owned historical truss bridge built in 1928 to carry Royalton Hill Road over the White River. In May 2024, VTrans inspectors discovered critical findings on the bridge's floor beams and gusset plates and closed it immediately to avoid potential injury or death.

Royalton is bisected from east to west by the White River, I-89, and the railroad, which makes north to south travel extremely difficult. The closure of Foxstand Bridge leaves only two remaining crossings in Royalton, resulting in an extensive detour route that adds over 7.5 miles northbound and 4.5 miles southbound on Class III gravel roads. This route may be only time-consuming in ideal conditions but in snow or mud season, the route becomes nearly impassable.

Residents on the west side of the bridge are effectively stranded at times and there is high potential of life-threatening situations for the 80 affected families. The delayed response times from the fire department, rescue squad, and law enforcement have caused many sleepless nights to myself and other public servants and first responders in Royalton.

Lasting economic harm has been done to multiple independent and family-run businesses due to the bridge closure. Farmstands on the west side of the bridge are now inaccessible and can no longer rely on through traffic and the loss of income has caused them to shutter. Residents faced with longer commutes to work now travel at dangerous speeds past working farms and homes. The bridge closure has also caused the town to incur additional costs in premature maintenance due to the increased traffic volume on the detour route and other town bridges.

Construction of the replacement is currently planned to begin in 2027, and the bridge is scheduled re-open in the fall of 2028, more than four years since its closure. Phasing or further delay in the construction of the Foxstand Bridge replacement would be devastating to our community. I respectfully urge the committee to prioritize the Foxstand Bridge project due to length of closure, the economic impact, and the number of families negatively impacted.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Town of Royalton. I welcome questions from the committee.

Ryan Britch Biography: Ryan Britch serves as Royalton's Town Administrator. Prior to this role, Ryan worked at the Department of Veteran Affairs, The American Legion, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America for where he specialized on veterans' mental health policy. Ryan served as an Infantryman for 8 years in the Vermont Army National Guard and deployed to Paktia, Afghanistan in 2010. After leaving the military, he joined the Peace Corps and spent over 2 years in the Kingdom of Swaziland working on agricultural, youth, and HIV-AIDS education programs. Ryan is a graduate of the University of Vermont and received his M.P.A at American University in Washington, D.C.