

TWO RIVERS-OTTAUQUECHEE REGIONAL COMMISSION

December 2006

Contact:

Vermont Representative to the RPO

3117 Rose Hill
The King Farm
Woodstock, VT 05091

Tel: 802-457-3188
Fax: 802-457-4728

www.trorc.org

Chuck Wise, TRORC's Senior Transportation Planner, was nominated to be Vermont's representative for the newly formed Rural Planning Organizations of America. "RPO America" is a new initiative sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and will be handled by the parent organization, the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) in Washington DC. This program seeks to expand opportunities for rural transportation planning and provide greater educational options for rural planners. As a rule, rural transportation planning has lagged behind federal and state urban planning processes. This organization will motivate legislative and funding changes to better support rural transportation planning. As the Vermont representative, Chuck will join his peers of state representatives and help guide the organization's development.

Staff:

Peter G. Gregory, AICP
Executive Director

Liza F. Wilson
Office Manager

Pete Fellows
GIS Manager

Kevin W. Geiger, AICP
Senior Planner

Kathleen Kanz
Regional Planner

Crystal Loffler
Planner

Sally B. Mansur
Regional Planner

Christopher L. Sargent
Planner

Chuck Wise
Senior Transportation Planner

TRORC has a history of being active on planning issues at a state and national level to ensure this region and the State of Vermont is duly represented. We are pleased Chuck is taking an active role to advance rural transportation planning.

New Local Land Use Publication Available

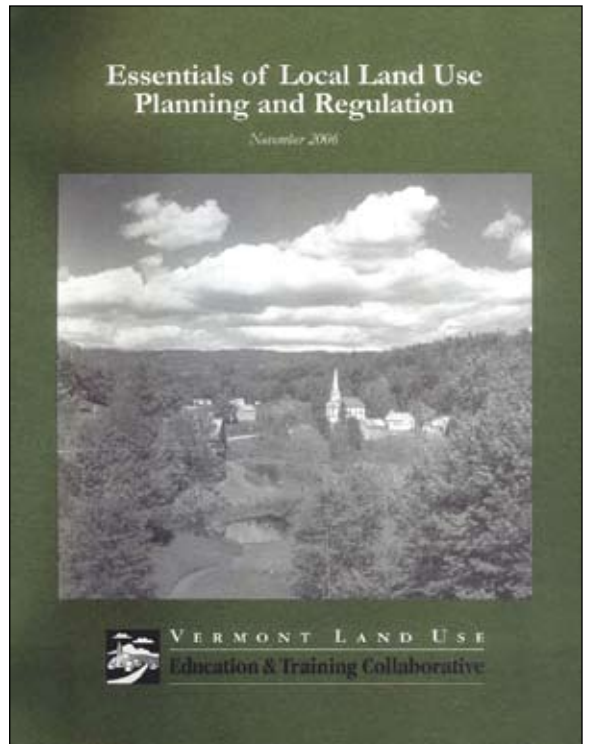
Essentials of Local Land Use Planning and Regulation seeks to provide an "operator's manual" for the volunteer officials who willingly dedicate their time in service to their community. It is designed for all local officials involved in municipal land use.

The 50-page manual provides an overview of municipal roles and responsibilities and the fundamentals of local planning and permitting in Vermont - what every board and commission member needs to know.

Essentials of Local Land Use Planning and Regulation was written by The Vermont League of Cities and Towns and produced by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), on behalf of the Vermont Land Use Education and Training Collaborative.

TRORC will obtain and distribute copies to local officials. In addition, the publication can be downloaded from the Vermont Planning Information Center website:

<http://www.vpic.info/pubs/essentials/>



Safe Routes to School Program

In 2006, the Regional Commission and Vermont Agency of Transportation started the Safe Routes to School program. All towns were invited to participate in a statewide grant program and from our region Norwich and Hartford schools were selected by VTrans. For two years, these schools will receive 100% federal funding to operate a local Safe Routes to School program.



Safe Routes to School is a program that seeks to improve safe walking and bicycling opportunities for our school children. To accomplish that goal, we will be working with the schools to provide education and motivational opportunities for walking and bicycling. Hosting special events like “Bike to School Day” and helping organize parent led neighborhood walking groups are two specific examples. We will also be examining local transportation systems to see where physical improvements, like sidewalks and bicycle paths, can be constructed to better accommodate walking and bicycling. These infrastructure improvements, if selected by state officials, will receive 100% funding.

We see two important benefits for this program. First, there is a great opportunity to increase physical activity for our children – improving their health and physical well being. Many of us remember the experience of walking or bicycling to school, but for many reasons this habit has been largely lost with the present generation. Second, a child walking or bicycling is a vehicle trip not made. Recent traffic studies have shown this region’s schools can generate 2 to 2 ½ vehicle trips per student everyday. By increasing safe opportunities for walking and bicycling, we substitute vehicle trips, reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality for everyone.

We have great expectations for our participating schools and hope to see additional schools participating in future grant cycles. If you have any questions or want additional information please contact Peter Gregory at 457.3188 or pgregory@trorc.org.

TRORC Region MPG awards total \$117,889

The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs recently announced its Municipal Planning Grant awards for 2007. Eleven towns in the TRORC region were awarded a total of \$117,889 in grant funds. Once again, the TRORC region received the largest share of state funding for this program.

The Municipal Planning Grant program is designed to support Vermont towns in their municipal planning efforts. The program funds technical assistance for town planning, implementation of plans and ordinances, encouragement of citizen participation and education and innovative demonstration planning projects.

The following towns were awarded funding for planning related projects:

Bradford:	Town Plan update
Bridgewater:	Town Plan update
Hancock:	Parcel Mapping
Hartford:	Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Newbury:	Zoning and Subdivision Regulations Revisions
Norwich:	Town Plan update- public participation and drafting
Randolph:	Zoning rewrite
Rochester:	Town Plan revision
Royalton:	Town Plan revision
Strafford:	South Strafford Village Master Plan
Woodstock:	Natural communities mapping

2006 Traffic Counts Season Ends By Chuck Wise

One of my favorite jobs is getting out to our communities and helping with traffic counts. From April to October I can escape from the office computer and conduct traffic count projects by request. This year I did almost 50 manual and automatic traffic counting projects. The automatic counts are my roadside computer and rubber tubes installation that are left out for a week capturing speed, classification, and volume data. Manual traffic counts are typically intersection turning movements or pedestrian/bicycle counts that involve being in a vehicle collecting morning and afternoon traffic peaks.

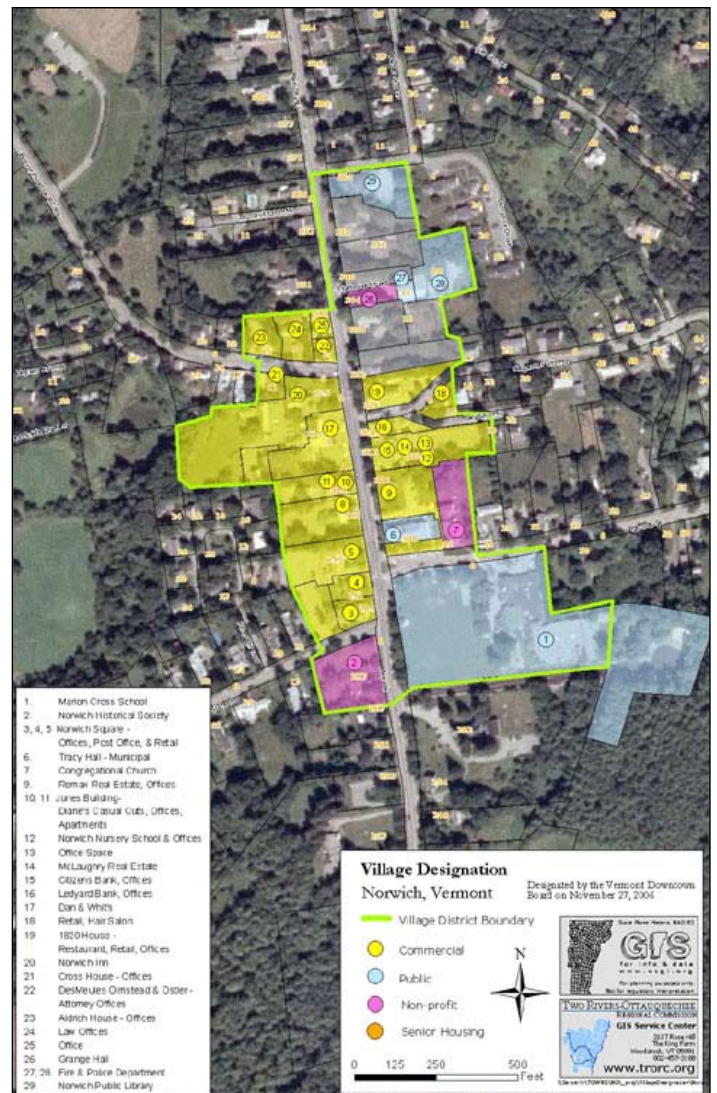
This season's traffic counts had many different purposes. In some cases I used the data for my own projects, in other instances the data was transferred to the Towns, Consultants, or VTrans staff. This year traffic volume data helped local road managers better understand traffic related impacts and prioritize their improvement projects. It was also used to understand potential impacts in changing local road traffic circulation patterns – be it one-way patterns or street closures. It supported town requests for roadway reclassification – allowing VTrans to consider upgrading roads from Class 3 to Class 2 status. Traffic speed data helped towns set and enforce their speed limits. Speed data was also provided to state officials to support town requests for lowering speed limits on state roads. The turning movement and bicycle/pedestrian data helped define how a specific road or intersection could be redesigned and engineered. This year I examined traffic calming options for a local road intersection. Traffic classification counts were used to help understand tractor truck traffic volumes along our local and state roadways. This information fed back into road manager's work in prioritizing local transportation projects.

If you are interested in traffic counts for the 2007 field season, please contact me at 457.3188 or cwise@trorc.org.

Congratulations Strafford and Norwich!

We are pleased to announce that South Strafford and Norwich have joined 17 other TRORC villages in the Vermont Downtown Program. South Strafford was awarded Village Center Designation by the Vermont Downtown Board on September 25, 2006 and Norwich was awarded Village Center Designation on November 27, 2006.

As part of the Commission's economic development program, TRORC assists towns with the Village Designation application process and mapping. If you are considering applying for Village Designation contact Crystal Loffler for assistance.





Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission
3117 Rose Hill
The King Farm
Woodstock, VT 05091

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
Woodstock, VT 05091
Permit No. 3

Training and Workshops

Subdivision Primer

January 18, 7:00 pm - VT Interactive Television Sites

This workshop will focus on reviewing subdivision applications, paying particular attention to applying appropriate conditions, reviewing applications for planned unit developments and incorporating water quality protection strategies.

Local Water Quality Protection

January 25, Vermont College, 36 College Street in Montpelier, VT

Local governments are uniquely positioned to protect surface waters from stormwater runoff and other contaminants. This workshop will present several tools for water quality protection, paying particular attention to reviewing developments that are exempt from state regulations and the statewide watershed planning process.

Local Government Day

February 14, Capitol Plaza in Montpelier, VT

A special day at the Vermont State House for local officials to hear about the status of pending legislation from VLCT and VMCTA representatives, attend legislative hearings and speak with their representatives about the Vermont Legislature.

For more information on these events contact:

Jessica Hill at Vermont League of Cities and Towns 802-229-9111 or jhill@vlct.org

Visit TRORC's News and Events page: www.trorc.org/events.html