



Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission
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TWO RIVERS-OTTAUQUECHEE REGIONAL COMMISSION

May 2007

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TRORC Welcomes Rita Seto

The Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission welcomed Rita Seto as our newest Regional Planner at the beginning of April 2007. She received her Master of Urban Planning degree from McGill University with a background in transportation planning and GIS mapping. With her transportation planning and travel demand forecasting experience, she will be involved in these areas in addition to working with communities on local and regional planning projects including town plans, bylaws, and regional capacity studies. Prior to joining TRORC, Rita worked for the City of Toronto Transportation Services for two years as a mapping analyst where she maintained database records and developed maps for winter and summer road maintenance services.



Better Backroads Grants and Capital Planning

Stockbridge, Pittsfield, Thetford, Granville, and Hartland were awarded Vermont Better Backroads grants for reviewing and assessing their culverts. Approximately \$20,000 in Better Backroads funding will be matched with local and TRORC staff time (in lieu of the local cash match). TRORC will also be contributing project funding of \$15,000 for field work and consultant-based assessments. The grant applications were developed in partnership with the Towns and TRORC.

The culvert assessments are part of a larger capital planning project for local transportation systems. Capital planning work needs to be defensible because significant decisions and dollars are at stake. Consultant engineers (paid with grants funds), TRORC planners, and local road managers all work together to evaluate a transportation system and recommend improvements.

What investments can be made for the greatest possible benefit to people, the transportation system, and surrounding environment? What funding levels are appropriate for sustaining and/or improving the transportation system? These are two important questions that are covered in local capital planning.



Capital plans allow Selectboards to make better decisions on project priorities and program funding. Town citizens understand the how and why behind local road management. And everyone appreciates well maintained roads and the levels of funding and work needed to preserve our local roads.

Towns interested in the Vermont Better Backroads Grant program or in doing capital planning should contact Chuck Wise at TRORC.

Thunderstorms Ahead



Summer brings big storms. Local officials and road crews are reminded to report flood damage from a disaster incident to either the VTrans District #4 ((802-295-8888) or Vermont Emergency Management (800-347-0488) as soon as practical once the situation is safe. That way, state emergency officials will have a fast and accurate awareness of emergency conditions and any resulting damage. If possible, leave the damage in place until a state official can verify it. If immediate repairs are needed, take pictures prior to repair and document all repair costs. All citizens are reminded to never drive over flooded roads, as floodwaters may mask deadly holes.

New Flood Insurance Rate Maps Effective in September

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has recently notified Windham and Windsor County towns that their new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (D-FIRM) will become effective on September 28, 2007. FEMA will be sending towns final printed copies of these updated maps as well as Flood Insurance Study reports (if available for the town) prior to that effective date. Towns that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) (all TRORC Windsor County towns participate) are required to amend their existing flood hazard area regulations to meet the minimum requirements of the NFIP by the September 28, 2007 deadline. Windham and Windsor County towns that fail to do this are subject to suspension from the NFIP. TRORC staff members Kevin Geiger and Crystal Loffler have been working with town planning commissions to make the necessary changes. If you have any questions regarding updating your flood hazard bylaw to meet minimum NFIP standards please contact Kevin Geiger or Crystal Loffler at 457-3188.

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

Safe Routes to School

After a good deal of planning and outreach, the Towns of Hartford and Norwich have started walking and bicycling to school programs. On a regular basis these schools have special walk/bike to school days where a huge majority of children participate. Kids travel with scooters, bikes, rollerblades, shoes, and even shoes with wheels!! And regardless of their transportation mode, they all carry wonderful smiles to school.



This program has increased our awareness of the transportation needs that our children have in their own 'work commutes.' Hopefully encouraging more walking and bicycling will lower traffic congestion and make for healthier lifestyles! Schools interested in participating in the Safe Routes to School program should contact Chuck Wise. Funding of this Program comes from a grant made by the Federal Highway Administration to the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.



May is Older Americans Month

Observing Older Americans Month during May is a great opportunity for Vermonters to recognize recent achievements and continued challenges for seniors who reside in Vermont. In Windsor County, between 2005 and 2010 the number of residents 65 years or older will increase by approximately 15%, and between 2005 and 2015 the increase will be 43%. Understanding these changes that will occur in our communities is the first step in planning for the future.

The newest Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living initiative is called Choices for Care. This program enables individuals to choose whether they wish to reside in a nursing home, an assisted living facility or receive necessary support services in their own homes. In 2006, there were 306 individuals in Windsor County who were deemed eligible for nursing home level of care. Of this number, 198 people were residents of a nursing home, 83 were receiving home and community based services and 28 were residing in an assisted living facility. Vermont's goal is to reach a 60/40 ratio with 60% of individuals residing in a nursing home and 40% remaining in their homes or communities with supportive services. Most people would choose to remain in a home-like setting if at all possible and this saves resources for the state. During the first year of this new program, the State of Vermont saved over \$8.5 million.

While this effort saves money and respects the wishes of older Vermonters, it has profound implications for our communities and their planning for services such as transit and medical needs.

For more information about senior services call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-642-5119 or 802 885-2655.

Petroleum Brownfields Sites Sought

What does this look like to you? An abandoned garage? Or the future home of an auto detailing shop outside of a village center?

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission has just received an additional \$200,000 in grant funding from the EPA to help public or private property owners who suspect their property may be contaminated by petroleum products. Petroleum Brownfields sites can include land with underground storage tanks such as gas stations and town garages, auto repair shops, farms, junk yards, or any commercial building that might have had an underground tank for fuel or heating oil.

Why redevelop Brownfields? Brownfields redevelopment protects natural resources, especially water quality, and prevents sprawl. Experience with redeveloped properties has shown that a relatively small up front investment will yield steady tax returns to the community in the end. And for each acre of Brownfield that is redeveloped, we protect 4.5 acres of green field from new development.

TRORC grant funds are used to assess whether contamination exists on a property and, if so, to determine what can be done to return it to active use. Assessments can only be conducted on properties where owner permission has been granted. If the assessment determines that cleanup is needed, TRORC will help property owners seek funds to undertake the cleanup. Investigations are now proceeding at the Tip Top Tire site in Wilder and the Jungle site in Woodstock's East End, and redevelopment planning for municipal and commercial reuse and new workforce housing is underway.

TRORC is seeking new petroleum sites in our region, particularly those in or near villages. We would like to help expand, redevelop or reuse sites for new commercial or industrial operations, retail businesses, housing, open space, or other uses that advance the viability of our downtowns.

For information on assessments at petroleum sites, contact Sally Mansur at 457-3188 x 20 or smansur@trorc.org.



Community Fire Plan Grants



TRORC applied for and received two grants from the Northern VT RC&D Council to develop Community Fire Protection Plans in 2007 for Newbury and Rochester. These are the only communities statewide that will benefit from this funding. These grants will enable the Regional Commission to work with the state's Division of Forestry, the US Forest Service, and town officials and their fire departments in evaluating the two town's equipment and capacity to fight fires, especially wildfire, and review current and potential water supplies. We will also map forest and grass fuel types, and measure road widths for emergency access and for use as fire breaks. This is the first project of its kind in Vermont and we are looking forward to the outcome of this new project. TRORC also will share a smaller grant with the VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force in 2008 to implement some of the recommendations of the 2007 planning grants.