

February 2015



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### **Regional Plan for Sustainable Development**

The "East Central Vermont: What We Want" action plan is finalized, and some actions are already underway. Please let us know if you'd like to participate in moving any of the actions forward.

Visit the project website to access the complete action plan and to learn more.

[www.ecvermont.org](http://www.ecvermont.org)

## **Update on the East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD)**

East Central Vermont was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) in December of 2013. The EDD designation allows the region to gain access to Economic Development Administration (EDA) Investment Assistance through a variety of grant opportunities. This is the second federally designated District in Vermont.

Since receiving the designation, EDD partners have established a full board of directors, the executive committee is in place, and the first semi-annual meeting and workshop for 2015 is scheduled for May 21, 2015, 5:30 - 7:30 at the Billings Farm & Museum Theatre. Be sure to save the date, and know that more information will be out shortly. All are welcome to attend.

Please watch the events calendar and news postings at [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org) to stay updated on ECVEDD upcoming events and accomplishments. For more information, contact Lorelee Morrow at 802-457-3188 or via email at [lmorrow@trorc.org](mailto:lmorrow@trorc.org).

## **"East Central Vermont: What We Want" Plan Finished!**

After three years and over 100 meetings, the "East Central Vermont: What We Want" action plan is finished and implementation has already started! Funded by a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through an interagency partnership consisting of HUD, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the program's goal was to support planning and collaboration efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that helps communities with the interdependent challenges of: (1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; (2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; (3) energy use and climate change; and (4) public health and environmental impact.

The full plan is available for download at [www.ECVermont.org](http://www.ECVermont.org). Please watch the events calendar and news postings at [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org) to stay updated on ECVEDD upcoming events and accomplishments. For more information, contact Lorelee Morrow at 802-457-3188 or via email at [lmorrow@trorc.org](mailto:lmorrow@trorc.org).



*Tunbridge World's Fair*





## 2015 CEDS Update Underway

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) along with regional partners TRORC, Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, Springfield Regional Development Corporation, and Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation are providing funding to update the 2011 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS strategy committee is a volunteer group of local business, education, and government representatives that will provide guidance as the regional partners move through the update process. The new CEDS is scheduled for completion in September 2015. A draft is scheduled to be open for public comment for in July.



*South Royalton Village businesses*

Watch TRORC’s events calendar and news updates at [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org) to stay posted on the progress of the CEDS update. For more information, contact Lorelee Morrow at 802-457-3188 or via email at [lmorrow@trorc.org](mailto:lmorrow@trorc.org).

## Bringing Communities Together to Keep Out the Chill

It’s been a cold winter so far. Woodpiles are dwindling, and furnaces are running on overtime. While some are able to turn up the thermostat or huddle next to a fire, others have to make the difficult decision between buying fuel for the furnace or food for dinner. In its report “Energy Costs and Burdens in Vermont: Burdensome for Whom,” the Vermont Law School defines “fuel poverty” as a family spending more than 10% of their income to adequately heat their home (full report available here). The consequences of falling beneath the fuel poverty line include the negative health effects suffered by children and seniors who live in chronically cold houses, and the safety implications for a family which is forced to choose between a fuel bill and a phone bill. The Vermont Law School estimates that 1 in 5 Vermont families will experience fuel poverty this winter.



*COVER volunteers assist with roof repairs*

Within our region, COVER Home Repair works to bring communities together to work beside home owners whose houses are in need of urgent repair and weatherization. When COVER worked with Nick and Megan to weatherize their house, the couple was able to cut their spending on fuel by 50%. Around the region, COVER has worked with 200 home owners, resulting in regional fuel savings of an estimated \$50,000. COVER’s mission is to “Foster Hope and Build Community” and, by bringing neighbors together to improve our region’s fragile housing stock and keep families warm, this is exactly what they are doing.

Throughout our history, townspeople have come together to help their neighbors raise barns and houses. Now communities across the region should find similar opportunities to bring neighbors together to weatherize and repair houses, just as COVER has done.

More information on COVER Home Repair can be found at [www.coverhomerepair.org](http://www.coverhomerepair.org). COVER still has available slots open for home owners in need of repairs and weatherization this winter and for construction volunteers. For an application, please contact Gail Guernsey at (802) 296-7241, ext.105.

### Staff

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Lorelee Morrow, LEED  
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Ellie Ray,  
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Chris Sargent, AICP  
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Rita Seto, AICP  
Senior Planner

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## Fairlee Village Center Designation Awarded

On Monday, January 26th, 2015, the Vermont Downtown Development Board voted to approve the town of Fairlee's application for Village Center Designation. Fairlee's entrance into the state program is another step in an effort by the community to foster good planning and encourage economic development.



*Fairlee Village in Winter*

TRORC staff have been working with the community for several years, starting first with a complete revision of their municipal plan. This plan focused directly on the need to create a stronger year-round economy in Fairlee. As part of the Plan, which was approved by TRORC in September 2014, the Town planned to apply for Village Center Designation. TRORC worked with Village Center Program Staff and the Town of Fairlee to identify an area that would meet the statutory requirements of the program.

The Village Center Program is designed to encourage local efforts to revitalize villages, by offering priority consideration for state grants and other resources. Additionally, commercial property owners within this area are eligible for tax credits to support building improvements. A similar program is in place to award funding to preserve and revitalize historic downtowns. To learn more about either the Village Center Designation Program or the Downtown Designation Program through ACCD, please contact Chris Sargent at (802) 457-3188 or by e-mailing [csargent@trorc.org](mailto:csargent@trorc.org).

## TRORC's Local HMP Efforts Continue & 2015 LEOP Updates Are Set to Commence

TRORC staff continue to assist the Region's towns with updating single jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs). These plans assess towns' risks and vulnerabilities to man-made and natural disasters while also providing towns with concrete actions to mitigate the impacts of future disasters. Since October 2014, the towns of Fairlee, Norwich, Royalton, Hancock, Stockbridge, Plymouth, and Woodstock have submitted newly updated HMPs to FEMA for review and approval. Once approval has been granted by FEMA, these towns will be eligible for grant funding opportunities through FEMA, such as Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding. TRORC is currently working with or will soon begin working with the following towns to draft a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan: Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Chelsea, Hartland, Pomfret, Sharon, Strafford, Vershire, and West Fairlee.



*Streambank armoring along Rte. 12A, Braintree*

With spring only a few months away, it is nearly time to begin updating towns' Local Emergency Operations Plans (LEOPs)! If you are a municipal staff member, please be on the lookout for a 2015 LEOP template that will be arriving in mid-March with instructions on how to update the document. Remember, in order to be awarded relief from Vermont's Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (per the "ERAF" rule), each town must approve its 2015 LEOP by May 1, 2015.

If your town or organization would like to learn more about LEOPs or HMPs, please contact Samantha (Sam) Holcomb at (802) 540-6862 or via e-mail to [sholcomb@trorc.org](mailto:sholcomb@trorc.org).

East Central Vermont has Preferred Sustainability Status (PSS) through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, which benefits all the communities in the 40-town region - not just the East Central Vermont: What We Want project. HUD awards 2 bonus points to applicants that are working within us to further the Livability Principles. Other federal entities; such as, EPA and DOT also recognize the PSS points when reviewing grant applications.

Please contact Lorelee Morrow at [lmorrow@trorc.org](mailto:lmorrow@trorc.org) for more information.

## FY17 Regional Transportation Project Prioritization

Every year, TRORC's staff works with the Transportation Advisory Committee and town officials to prioritize transportation projects in this region. Each project is ranked by VTrans according to engineering criteria and other technical factors and by TRORC according to economic, historic, and other considerations.



*Paving in Bethel Village*

VTrans' analysis comprises 80% of the final decision, while TRORC's fills in the remaining 20%. Projects in Paving, State Highway Bridges, Town Highway Bridges and Traffic Safety are included in the ranking process. Many of the region's projects are in design and engineering or front-of-the-book phase (ready to go but waiting for funding). We have sent the draft list of regional projects to our member towns and comments will be accepted until March 6.

For additional information on the project prioritization list, please contact TRORC's Transportation Planner, Rita Seto, at (802) 457-3188 or via e-mail at [rseto@trorc.org](mailto:rseto@trorc.org).

## 2015 Regional Plan Updates

TRORC staff have begun the process of updating a number of Regional Plan elements to better align with state planning goals, as delineated in statute. In view of these updates, we are soliciting public comments on the draft elements, which are as follows:

- Utilities & Facilities
- Emergency Management
- Education
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Implementation



As updates are made throughout the Regional Plan update and adoption process, revised editions of the individual elements will be made available on our website, [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org). If you should wish to provide us with any comments or suggestions on any of the elements listed above, please feel free to contact our offices by calling (802) 457-3188 or, alternatively, by e-mailing information to us at [regionalplan@trorc.org](mailto:regionalplan@trorc.org). If any stakeholder groups should wish to have RPC staff give a presentation on the changes to the Regional Plan, we are available to host events within the Region. We welcome your input, and look forward to hearing your feedback!

## Announcements

### Creating Prosperity and Opportunity Confronting Climate Change Summit

Vermont Council on Rural Development will be hosting a summit to launch the Vermont Climate Economy Council on February 18, 2015 at Vermont Technical College. The premise of the summit is that innovative economic development can be leveraged as a strategy to confront climate change while also creating jobs, building a national reputation, encouraging entrepreneurialism, and promoting the in-migration of young adults to Vermont. To learn more about the summit, please visit the VCRD website at <http://www.vtrural.org/programs/climate-economy>. To register for the event, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/l4ojvw>.



*Source: [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org)*

# Announcements

## VTrans On-Road Bicycle Plan



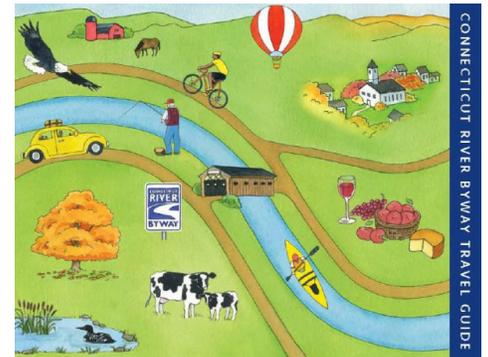
The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is continuing its community outreach efforts to learn where individuals currently enjoy bicycle riding as well as those places where people would like to be able to ride safely on state roadways. This will help inform plans to determine where work is most needed to ensure roads are bike-friendly to the public. To learn more and participate in this project, you may either:

1. Mark your calendar to attend or stream the project's public meeting on April 30, 2015 from 6-8 PM.
2. Add your information to the On-Road Bicycle Plan WikiMap online at <http://vtransplanning.vermont.gov/bikeplan>

To learn more on this new VTrans effort, please visit the website noted above.

## Connecticut River Byway Brochure Now Available

Last month, a Connecticut River Byway Brochure was released and made available at locations all along the byway, such as local visitor centers. This travel guide brochure was a collaborative effort between staff at Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission and TRORC over recent years, and showcases the many historic and cultural sites that appear along the byway. To peruse a copy of the brochure, it may be viewed in its entirety online at <http://tinyurl.com/pak684d>. Alternatively, contact the TRORC office at (802) 457-3188 for a printed version or, better still, venture out along the byway itself and collect a copy at one of the many visitor centers, sites, or retailers that carry them! The brochure includes many a scenic picture, maps, and sample route itineraries to guide you along your way.



Alternatively, contact the TRORC office at (802) 457-3188 for a printed version or, better still, venture out along the byway itself and collect a copy at one of the many visitor centers, sites, or retailers that carry them! The brochure includes many a scenic picture, maps, and sample route itineraries to guide you along your way.

## Public Service Department Releases Vermont "Total Energy Study"



In early December 2014, the Vermont Public Service Department released its "Total Energy Study" to address the aggressive greenhouse gas emissions goals set out by the Vermont General Assembly in 2005. In an effort to reduce emissions levels to those seen in 1990 or earlier, the 2011 Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan was adopted, setting a goal of acquiring 90% of Vermont's energy from renewable resources by 2050. The latest "Total Energy Study" assesses the feasibility and means of achieving this goal in identifying and evaluating the policy measures and the technological pathways required to meet the goal. In so doing, the Public Service Department has demonstrated that reaching the state's emissions reductions and renewable energy goals are fundamentally achievable while still promoting economic prosperity. The findings from this study will be leveraged to substantially inform the latest Comprehensive Energy Plan update. For additional information and access to this study, please visit the Public Service Department website at <http://tinyurl.com/lj9avxs>.

## Sign up for VT-Alert

With the region being in the full throes of winter, now is an opportune time to register for the VT-Alerts system. This free service is provided by Vermont Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. By signing up for this free phone, e-mail, and/or text message service, you will kept up-to-date on developing public safety issues, such as severe weather events, road closures, and hazardous materials spills. You may enroll for the VT-Alert service through <https://users.vtalert.gov/NewAccount.aspx>. Be safe and forewarned this winter and beyond!



Source: [www.vtalert.gov](http://www.vtalert.gov)

## Announcements

### Wildlife Habitat Management Book from VT Fish & Wildlife Available

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has just published a new book entitled "A Landowner's Guide: Wildlife Habitat Management for Lands in Vermont," which serves as a comprehensive guide to wildlife habitat management on private lands. Co-authored by the Fish and Wildlife Department, biologists, and land managers, the guide gives specific, easy-to-follow recommendations on methods for improving habitats for specific species, for fish, and for wildlife in general. To learn more about this book and other publications, please visit the Fish and Wildlife Department website: <http://tinyurl.com/q7obfx3>.



### Connecticut River Watershed Council Releases a Series of Videos on Flood Readiness

Six new videos produced by the Connecticut River Watershed Council demonstrating how to make communities more flood resilient have gone live via their website. Visit the CRWC website at <http://tinyurl.com/nw5stgh> or take a look at <http://flooready.vermont.gov> to learn more about the videos, how to mitigate flood damage, and how to procure post-disaster funding to regroup and rebuild.



Connecticut River Watershed Council

Source: [www.ctriver.org](http://www.ctriver.org)

### Efficiency Vermont Soliciting Information for Three Year Plan

Efficiency Vermont is creating a three year plan for Vermont's Energy Efficiency Utility, and is looking for feedback, comments, and suggestions from the public. If you are interested in learning more about this plan, please visit the plan website (<http://tinyurl.com/nsgkpk2>) to review the presentation given at statewide forums over October and November. Additionally, you may complete an online survey on priorities and programs to share your thoughts on the Plan or contact Efficiency Vermont Director Jim Merriam at [jmerriam@veic.org](mailto:jmerriam@veic.org) or by calling (802) 540-7604.



## Upcoming Events

### December 18 - AIVT Environmental & Regulatory Seminar

7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Town Hall Conference Room, Woodstock

Come and join TRORC staff and Woodstock area residents to discuss pedestrian access and safety improvements around the Woodstock Elementary School area as part of a village sidewalk study. To learn more, read the event flyer at <http://tinyurl.com/npq5c7k>. For any additional questions, please contact Reta Seto at (802) 457-3188 or by e-mailing [rseto@trorc.org](mailto:rseto@trorc.org).

### February 11 - TRORC Executive Committee Meeting

3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

King Farm, Woodstock

For more information, contact Dee Gish at [dgish@trorc.org](mailto:dgish@trorc.org) or 457-3188.

### February 18 - "Creating Prosperity and Opportunity Confronting Climate Change" Summit

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Vermont Technical College, Randolph

Vermont Council on Rural Development is hosting an inaugural climate change summit. Please review the announcement above for further information. Registration is required.

## Upcoming Events

### **February 19 - LEPC #12 Meeting**

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Royalton Police Barracks, Royalton

For more information, contact Rita Seto at [rseto@trorc.org](mailto:rseto@trorc.org) or 457-3188.

### **February 25 - TRORC Board Meeting**

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Thompson Senior Center, Woodstock

For more information, contact Dee Gish at [dgish@trorc.org](mailto:dgish@trorc.org).

### **February 25 - SERG Energy Improvements and Financing Forum**

6:30 PM

Bugbee Senior Center, White River Junction

SERG Director Bob Walker and representatives from Efficiency Vermont will present about the various energy improvements and low-interest financing available to many Vermont residents. If you have questions about this event or generally want to learn more about PACE, contact SERG at (802) 785-4126, or Efficiency Vermont at [www.encyvermont.com/PACE](http://www.encyvermont.com/PACE), [PACE@encyvermont.com](mailto:PACE@encyvermont.com) or 888-921-5990.

### **February 26 - SERG Energy Improvements and Financing Forum**

7:00 PM

Woodstock Town Hall, Woodstock

SERG Director Bob Walker and representatives from Efficiency Vermont will present about the various energy improvements and low-interest financing available to many Vermont residents. If you have questions about this event or generally want to learn more about PACE, contact SERG at (802) 785-4126, or Efficiency Vermont at [www.encyvermont.com/PACE](http://www.encyvermont.com/PACE), [PACE@encyvermont.com](mailto:PACE@encyvermont.com) or 888-921-5990.

### **March 12 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting**

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Tracy Hall, Norwich

For more information, contact Rita Seto at [rseto@trorc.org](mailto:rseto@trorc.org) or 457-3188.

### **March 25 - TRORC Board Meeting**

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Thompson Senior Center, Woodstock

For more information, contact Dee Gish at [dgish@trorc.org](mailto:dgish@trorc.org).

### **April 30 - VTrans On-Road Bicycle Plan Public Meeting**

6:30 AM - 8:00 PM

Vermont Interactive Technologies, Vermont Technical College, Morrill Hall, Randolph Center

VTrans will be hosting one of a number of statewide meetings to discuss their On-Road Bicycle Plan. Participants may attend a local meeting or follow a live stream of the event to learn more about the project and provide input.

## Grants/Funding Opportunities

### **Emergency Preparedness and Response Equipment Funding**

The VT Division of Emergency Management & Homeland Security is offering a series of training sessions for first response agencies to learn about funding opportunities for communications, law enforcement, and special ops equipment purchases. Grant applications are due by 2/27/15. For further information on the training sessions and the grant opportunities, visit the DEMHS grant site at <http://hsu.vermont.gov/funding> or contact Jessica Stolz at [jessica.stolz@state.vt.us](mailto:jessica.stolz@state.vt.us).



## Environmental Education Local Grants

The EPA is currently seeking requests for proposals for their Environmental Education Local Grants Program. These grants are awarded annually by the EPA to support locally-focused environmental education projects that increase public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues while also providing the skills that grant participants need to make informed environmental decisions and take responsible actions toward the environment. The award ceiling per grant is \$91,000, and the RFP deadline is March 6, 2015. Please visit the EPA website <http://tinyurl.com/ou9trjm> for additional information or contact Karen Scott at the U.S. EPA Office in Washington, D.C. at [EEgrants@epa.gov](mailto:EEgrants@epa.gov).



## VT Farm Fund Business Builder & Emergency Loans

The Vermont Farm Fund, part of the Center for and Agricultural Economy, offers lending opportunities to local farmers and food producers throughout the state. Business Builder lending opportunities are awarded for \$5,000-\$30,000 to fund projects that build business and result in an increase in the diversity of foods produced in the state. Emergency Loans range from \$5,000-10,000, and are intended to support farmers that have suffered a devastating loss that puts their career or farm in jeopardy. For further information on these programs, visit the VFF website at <https://www.vermontfarmfund.org/loan-programs>.



Source: [www.vermontfarmfund.org](http://www.vermontfarmfund.org)

## Request for Proposals on Watershed Resilience

The High Meadows Fund is seeking proposals to promote resilience in Vermont's watersheds for projects that seek to "inspire and encourage the creative and inclusive building of resilience within our watersheds." Full RFP applications are to be submitted no later than April 15, 2015 by 5 PM. Additional information and links to the full RFP can be accessed by visiting the High Meadows Fund website: <http://tinyurl.com/pry74vn>.



Source: [www.highmeadowsfund.org](http://www.highmeadowsfund.org)

## USDA Rural Development Community Connect Program

USDA Rural Development is accepting grant applications for its Community Connect Program, which aims to provide broadband internet service to rural communities throughout the county. Funding may be used for a range of purposes that support internet proliferation in rural settings, from site acquisition to bandwidth expansion or improvements. Applications are due by February 17, 2015. To learn more about this opportunity, visit the Rural Development website at [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/utp\\_commconnect.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/utp_commconnect.html). Alternatively, email [community.connect@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:community.connect@wdc.usda.gov) or call the Loan Origination and Approval Division, Telecommunications Program at (202) 720-0800.



## PACE Energy Financing

Through the Property Assessed Clean Energy program, Vermonters have access to low-interest rate financing opportunities to make home energy efficiency improvements. Energy audits, weatherization, cold climate heat pump installation, solar/heat pump water heaters, high efficiency heating systems, and renewable energy generation systems are all eligible under this program at rates as low as 0% (program dependent rates). If you are a resident of a PACE town (Bradford, Hartford, Hartland, Norwich, Randolph, Sharon, Strafford, Thetford, Vershire, or Woodstock) and are interested in this financing opportunity or learning about upcoming PACE forums, contact your town energy committee, SERG at (802) 785-4126, or Efficiency Vermont at [www.encyvermont.com/PACE](http://www.encyvermont.com/PACE), [PACE@efficiencyvermont.com](mailto:PACE@efficiencyvermont.com) or (888) 921-5990.





Two Rivers-Ottauquechee  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

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