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Memo

From the Department of Public Works

To: Colchester Selectboard

From: Bryan K. Osborne, Director of Public Works

Cc: Aaron Frank, Town Manager

Renae Marshall, Deputy Town Manager

Date: June 24, 2024

Re: US Route 2 and Clay Point Road Intersection Update

Over the past two years, there have been several communications and meetings between the Town and the Vermont Agency of Transportation, (VTrans) regarding the US Route 2 and Clay Point Road intersection. This memo serves to summarize and provide a current update of these efforts.

History

On July 19, 2022, the Colchester Selectboard sent a letter to VTrans requesting consideration of a speed limit reduction on US Route 2, as well as the advancement of a full safety review of the corridor. VTrans responded to this letter on September 20, 2022 advising that changes to speed limits are under the jurisdiction of the Vermont Traffic Committee. They further advised that they would perform the technical analysis to evaluate whether a change in the speed limit was warranted, and forward their recommendations to the Traffic Committee. They also agreed to perform a safety analysis of the corridor.

On October 25, 2022, the Town met with VTrans and the Vermont Traffic Committee. VTrans reported that their evaluation of the corridor did not reveal any immediate safety improvements that were warranted, nor did their analysis conclude that a reduction in the current speed limit was warranted. However, upon further consideration by the Vermont Traffic Committee, the committee approved a reduction in the speed limit from 55 mph to 50 mph.

On October 24, 2023, the Colchester Selectboard sent a follow-up letter to VTrans requesting consideration of further reductions to the speed limit in this area, and that VTrans consider engaging collaboratively with the Town on a series of short, medium, and long-term safety improvement options to improve the overall safety of this intersection for all travelers. Some of these improvements were related entirely to the Town Highway

approaches to US Route 2, and thereby fall under the jurisdiction of the Town of Colchester, while others were within the State Highway right-of-way and therefore fell under the jurisdiction of VTrans.

On January 19, 2024, VTrans met with the Town to discuss the Town's most recent request. The meeting could be best characterized as a collaborative effort and a commitment by VTrans to evaluate and consider possible short- and medium-term improvement options to improve the overall safety of US Route 2 and the Clay Point Road intersection. Also, at this meeting, VTrans did express their support of a longer-term effort to study the intersection to identify possible reconfigurations to improve the safety of the intersection. These types of studies typically occur through a process referred to as "scoping" and in this case, would be implemented through a request by the Town to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, (CCRPC) to include the work in their FY25 Unified Planning Work Program, (UPWP).

Update

On March 7, 2024, VTrans formally responded to the Town's October 24, 2023 request for consideration of further reductions to the speed limit in US Route 2. VTrans also addressed the Town's request to consider possible short- and medium-term improvement options to improve the overall safety of US Route 2 and the Clay Point Road intersection.

VTrans again noted that changes to the speed limit fall under the jurisdiction of the Vermont Traffic Committee, and that VTrans would not recommend any further changes to the speed limit to the committee. VTrans also responded to the Town's request for a variety of possible short- and medium-term improvement options to improve the overall safety of US Route 2 and the Clay Point Road intersection. As these options are entirely within the state right-of-way, they would need to be implemented by VTrans. The proposed options as well as VTrans position for each is as follows;

- Radar speed feedback signs – Not allowed at this location consistent with the Agency's policy and guidance for use.
- Dynamic warning signs – Would not be effective and present problems with reliability and maintenance.
- Extend edge-line and centerline rumble strips – This request could be reviewed in further detail and accommodated through the next paving project through the corridor.
- Optical speed bars – Not an appropriate location for this traffic control feature based on the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- Guard rail around jug-handle islands – Not a standard application of guard rails and may create other safety issues.

VTrans also reiterated their support of being a partner in beginning a scoping study of the intersection with the Town and the CCRPC to evaluate future possible configurations, including a signalized intersection or a roundabout. Concurrently, the Town has continued advancing short-term improvement options related to Town Highways that fall under the Town's jurisdiction. These include the following,

- Install advanced warning signs for the stop signs on the Clay Point Road approaches – complete
- Install larger stops signs on all side street approaches along US Route 2, along with solar powered red flashing beacons – All materials are in hand and necessary permits have been secured. These will be installed as soon as time allows considering resources and other priorities.
- Install splitter islands on both Clay Point Road approaches – Design is complete and awaiting review and permitting from VTrans. Construction funding is included in the Town's FY25 Capital Budget Program.

On May 15, 2024, the CCRPC's UPWP was formally approved following a public hearing, which included scoping of the US Route 2/Clay Point Road intersection. The CCRPC is hopeful that this work can get under way by July of 2024. This project will be managed by the CCRPC with close coordination with both VTrans and the Town. As a regional project, there will be no cost to the Town. The CCRPC intends to assign one of their retained transportation consultants, Stantec Consulting Services of South Burlington, Vermont, to this project. The project budget is $80,000. The scoping study, including the selection of a preferred alternative is expected to take approximately 6-12 months. Following the completion of the study, next steps will include design, permitting, right-of-way acquisition and other project development tasks. The CCRPC and VTrans will need to identify funding sources for these tasks, including eventual construction considering other regional and state priorities. Realistically, a 5-10-year time frame should be expected for this overall effort.

Thanks