



**CITY OF BURLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

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MEMORANDUM

To: Burlington City Council
Public Works Commission
Fr: Chapin Spencer, Director
Re: Update on the Champlain Parkway Project

October 7, 2015

This memo is a follow up on Champlain Parkway activities since the November 2014 and February 2015 updates I provided to the City Council. At the last Board of Finance meeting, the Board unanimously recommended Council approval of the 5th amendment to our Cooperative Agreement with the State of Vermont for the Champlain Parkway. As the Council takes action on this amendment, City staff wants to make sure you have a comprehensive project update on this key 2.5-mile transportation investment.

In 2015, the project has achieved a legal milestone, the DPW Commission lowered the speed limit along the project corridor, and the design continues to advance in ways that reflect the public input we've received along this corridor. Today's two-lane, multi-modal design that includes significant stormwater, bike/pedestrian, and traffic calming components is a dramatic departure from the project's distant origins and will complement and foster the ongoing vitality of the South End well into the future.

Specifically, this project will:

- Build a new 25-mph City street between Home Avenue and Lakeside Avenue that will expand South End connectivity.
- Construct 1.5 miles of new shared-use path in the South End – creating a continuous shared-use path from the border of South Burlington at Queen City Park Road to Pine & Kilburn where new buffered bike lanes will connect to downtown on Pine Street up to Maple Street.
- Reduce truck and commuter traffic through the Home Avenue, Flynn Avenue, and Champlain School neighborhoods – allowing for future street redesign opportunities in those areas.
- Install two major stormwater features that together with other project components will improve stormwater management over current conditions.
- Install new sidewalk, pedestrian signals, and transit shelters.
- Complement the Railyard Enterprise Project's multi-modal connectivity between Pine Street and Battery Street so that there will be more connections between downtown and the South End.

Is this project perfect? No, it isn't. It has been challenging for many Administrations to work within the project's original Purpose & Need and re-create the Champlain Parkway into a more modern, pedestrian-oriented investment for the City's future – but we've made tremendous progress – including

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recently as you'll see below. We must all remember that the ideas that can't feasibly be added into the Champlain Parkway project can be pursued as separate projects. This was done with the community's desire to better connect Pine Street with Battery Street when the Railyard Enterprise Project was launched in 2012 (more information at www.ccrpcvt.org). It was done with the construction of sidewalk improvements and the installation of six crosswalks and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons along Pine Street. It was done with the Pine & Lakeside intersection improvements underway now. Our City is constantly evolving and its transportation and infrastructure needs must respond to these changes.

Permit Milestone:

- In August 2015, the City received a favorable VT Supreme Court ruling on the last outstanding appeal of the project's Act 250 permit. The Act 250 permit is now final and authorizes construction of the project with 39 permit conditions. Conditions of note include post-construction traffic monitoring of a number of intersections including Parkway/Lakeside, Pine/Locust and Pine/Howard.

Speed Limits:

- At its May 20th meeting, the DPW Commission unanimously agreed to set a 25 mph speed limit north of Home Avenue (down from 35 mph) to be consistent with the City-wide speed limit. The Commission also voted to drop the speeds more quickly between I-189 and Home Avenue as the Champlain Parkway transitions from a highway to a City street.

Design Details:

- Earlier this year, the City compiled previous public input and obtained VTrans consent to develop design details that will further enhance safety for all modes along the project corridor – with a focus on the Pine Street portion of the project.
- The proposed features include raised intersections, bump-outs, new bike lanes, transit shelters, and more pedestrian-friendly intersections.
- VTrans has agreed to incorporate these features into the project as long as they do not unreasonably impact the project's cost, permits, or timeline.
- The City is now working with the project consultant CHA to incorporate these elements into the project plans.
- We are also preparing visuals for the current designs and will present them at the public informational meeting in late October or November.

Upcoming Public Meetings:

- To keep the community well-informed on the project's status, share the latest design details, and to answer any questions, we will be hosting an informational meeting on the project in late October or November. Once the date and time are finalized, we will widely publicize this opportunity. It is important to make clear that the project must be constructed as permitted. This public meeting will be to provide updates and answer questions – but not to provide design input as we are beyond that stage of the process.
- We would also welcome the opportunity to present a similar project update with current project plans to the full City Council should it be requested.
- We've continued to provide periodic updates to the Ward 5 Neighborhood Planning Assembly – the last presentation was on March 19, 2015.

Next Steps and Timeline:

- Complete further soil characterization work along project corridor

- Review, approval, refinement of project engineering plans to finalize areas necessary for permanent and temporary right-of-way
- Develop soil management plan for the project
- Acquire any additional areas needed for right-of-way
- Complete Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Study (FSEIS) re-evaluation and permit extensions / amendments
- Refine project plans to construction level of detail
- Bid project
- Construct project (estimated duration is two full construction seasons, with a fall 2018 construction start)

RELATED PROJECT UPDATES:

While we are working hard to advance the Champlain Parkway, we are also advancing many other projects within or adjacent to the project corridor including:

Pine & Lakeside Intersection Improvements: This fall and winter, we will be investing in a comprehensive upgrade to the Pine & Lakeside intersection that will include new mast arm traffic signal equipment, installation of pedestrian signals, new ADA compliant concrete sidewalks, and relocation of a commercial driveway.

Railyard Enterprise Project: The goal of this project to improve connectivity for all modes between Pine Street and Battery Street while also looking to expand economic opportunities in adjacent areas and improve access to the railyard. After two years of collaborative work and reviewing dozens of project alternatives, the project Steering Committee on October 29th will be reviewing three proposed alternatives to bring forward into a federal permitting process called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Once the Steering Committee votes to advance these alternatives, we will be presenting the alternatives to the DPW Commission and the City Council later this year.

King & Maple Neighborhood Traffic Calming Effort: We have presented conceptual plans for traffic calming / neighborhood enhancement at a recent neighborhood meeting and are gathering input now. We seek to develop a final plan this winter.

Champlain School Pedestrian Improvements: This Safe Routes to School grant funded project will install new sidewalk on Birchcliff Parkway and improve pedestrian crossings at three neighborhood intersections on Locust Street and Birchcliff Parkway.

Many of these projects have been advanced with strong support from our partners at the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration, and we thank them for their ongoing support.

I hope this update has been helpful. Feel free to contact me (cspencer@burlingtonvt.gov) to discuss any of this in further detail.

CC: Michele Boomhower, Director of PPAID, VTrans
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