

# THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS<sup>1</sup>

## PROJECT SELECTION

**Chittenden County Towns can request that projects be added to VTrans program through the CCMPO. Projects are added to CCMPO's prioritized project list and submitted to VTrans.**

## PROJECT PROGRAMMING

### Capital Program

In order for VTrans to spend funds on a project it must be listed in the Capital Program. VTrans submits a Capital Program to the legislature each year and the legislature must approve the list in order for projects to advance. The Capital Program categorizes projects according to the following three lists:

#### *Front of the Book*

*Front of the Book* projects are part of VTrans four-year program. A project moves from the *Development and Evaluation* list to the *front of the book* when it has completed preliminary plan development.

#### *Development and Evaluation*

A project moves from the *Candidate* list to the *Development and Evaluation* list if preliminary plans are expected within 12 to 24 months.

#### *Candidate*

A project gets on the *Candidate* list after it has completed the planning process and has been accepted by the CCMPO and passed on to VTrans.

### Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Chittenden County projects to be funded with Federal funds must be programmed in the TIP, developed by CCMPO. The TIP is developed annually and may be amended throughout the year. It is developed with input from Chittenden County municipalities and VTrans and must be approved by the Secretary of Transportation.

## PROJECT DEFINITION

**Project definition is a process that begins to define what the problem is that is being addressed, and possible alternatives to address that problem. Project definition must consider environmental constraints and must provide the public with opportunity to provide input on the project.**

### Purpose and Need

Every project must develop a Purpose and Need Statement. This statement is used to evaluate alternatives developed for the project. Alternatives are expected to address issues raised in the Purpose and Need Statement. The Purpose and Need Statement should include the following:

- ▶ What are the benefits of the project?
- ▶ Why is it necessary?
- ▶ How will it improve the community or region?

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<sup>1</sup> This summary was prepared by CCMPO staff using VTrans Project Development Manual, December 1997. It has not been endorsed by VTrans.

## **Project Scoping**

Scoping is a process that develops safe and effective alternatives based on documented rational that meet the stated purpose and need while minimizing environmental impacts. The Scoping process results in the recommendation of a preferred alternative, which has local, regional and VTrans support. Steps in Scoping include the following:

### ***Collect background information***

The first step in scoping is to collect pertinent information such as site features, environmental conditions, social features, traffic and accident data, intersection evaluations, right of way limits, and other information relevant to the project.

### ***Local Concerns Meeting***

The Local Concerns Meeting is the first of two required public meetings. The purpose of the Local Concerns Meeting is to gather local and regional input about the problem being address by the project. It is not a forum to present solutions.

### ***Development of project alternatives***

Once background data has been collected and local concerns have been heard alternatives begin to be developed. The No Build alternative must be one of the alternatives considered.

### ***Alternatives Presentation Meeting***

The Alternatives Presentation Meeting is the second required public meeting. At this meeting alternatives are presented. A locally preferred alternative is selected at or after this meeting.

### ***Scoping Report***

The Scoping Report is prepared once a preferred alternative is selected. The Scoping Report includes the purpose and need of the project, methodology, environmental and traffic data, the alternatives considered and the solution recommended. The Scoping Report should also document the public involvement process.

### ***Project Definition Team (PDT)***

Projects that require right of way acquisition or cost over \$1.5 million must be presented to the VTrans PDT. The PDT reviews the project on a technical basis and must accept the project before it can proceed to the next step.

## **CONCEPTUAL DESIGN**

**The Conceptual Design phase follows Project Definition and includes the following elements:**

### **Conceptual Design**

Once the preferred alternative has been approved, work can begin on developing conceptual plans. Plans generated during the scoping process are used as the foundation for producing the conceptual plans. The development of conceptual plans typically includes the following:

- ▶ Basis design concepts
- ▶ Horizontal alignment
- ▶ Vertical alignment (profile)
- ▶ Special features

- ▶ Coordination issues
- ▶ Preliminary permit investigation

## **502 Hearing**

A 502 Hearing is required for any project that will involve acquisition of right of way. The 502 hearing must accomplish the following:

- ▶ The reasons for the route shall be set forth before the acquisition of any lands or rights.
- ▶ VTrans will consider all objections and suggestions for changes or recommendations made by any interested person.

## **Environmental Studies and Documentation**

### *Federal requirements*

The following reviews are required for projects that will be funded with federal funds.

- ▶ *National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* review is required for all major federal actions. In order to satisfy the requirements of NEPA one of the following documents must be prepared:
  - Categorical Exclusion (CE) for actions that do not have a significant effect on the environment.
  - Environmental Assessment (EA) determines if the action will have significant impacts on the environment. If it is determined that the impacts will not be significant a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be issued.
  - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required if there is potential for significant environmental impacts. The EIS involves detailed environmental review and offers mitigation for impacts. The EIS results in a Record of Decision (ROD).
- ▶ *Section 106* of the National Historic Preservation Act requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties.
- ▶ *Section 4(f)* of the Department of Transportation Act, as amended, was enacted to protect parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.
- ▶ *Section 404* of the Clean Water Act requires permits for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands.

### *State Requirements*

The state of Vermont requires consideration of the following environmental issues:

- ▶ Streams
- ▶ Wetlands
- ▶ Fish and Wildlife
- ▶ Endangered species
- ▶ Agricultural lands
- ▶ Historic sites
- ▶ Archaeological studies
- ▶ Noise

- ▶ Air quality
- ▶ Land Use - *Act 250* requires developments of regional impact to obtain a land use permit from the one of the state's District Environmental Commissions. The Act 250 review process includes the following:
  - Application and conceptual plans must be submitted to the District Environmental Commission.
  - A hearing is set to gather testimony from interested parties. The commission will issue a draft permit and finding of fact.

## **PROJECT DESIGN**

**The Project Design Phase begins following successful completion of the environmental review phase.**

### **Preliminary Plan Development**

Preliminary design is the first step in the Project Design phase. Preliminary plans include the following:

- ▶ Details including roadside barriers, intersections, drainage and erosion control, lighting
- ▶ Survey of center and sidelines to assess impacts to property owners
- ▶ Subsurface investigation
- ▶ Permits
- ▶ Property owner visits

### **Semi-Final Plans**

Semi-Final design includes incorporating any changes in design details as a result of property owner meetings or in response to comments received from permitting agencies.

### **Purchase of rights of way**

Right of way plans detail lands, rights and easements that will need to be acquired to construct the project. Required steps include the following:

- ▶ Determine lands needed
- ▶ Appraisals
- ▶ Necessity Hearing
- ▶ Compensation Hearing
- ▶ Condemnation if necessary

### **Final Plan Development**

Most of the structural design and traffic signal details are developed during this phase. Final plan development includes the following:

- ▶ Completion of contract documents
- ▶ Obtain all permits
- ▶ Advertise and bidding

## **CONSTRUCTION**