



CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT
CITY COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION, ENERGY & UTILITIES COMMITTEE

c/o Department of Public Works
645 Pine Street, Suite A
Post Office Box 849
Burlington, VT 05402-0849

802.863.9094 VOX
802.863.0466 FAX
802.863.0450 TTY
www.burlingtonvt.gov

Councilor Franklin Paulino, Chair *North District*
Councilor Jack Hanson, *East District*
Councilor Jane Stromberg, *East District*

Inquiries:
Peter Egolf
802.734.5172
pegolf@burlingtonvt.gov

Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee of the City Council

Minutes – Tuesday, May 26, 2020 5:30 PM

1. **Meeting Started at 5:33 PM**
2. **Minutes of 2/4/2020. On Motion of Councilor Paulino the minutes were approved as written.**
3. **Public Forum**
 - Tony Redington – Walk safety advocate. Proponent of traffic circles for safety and environmental benefits. Concern regarding Railyard Enterprise Project containing at a minimum a sidewalk and separate bikeway.
 - Steve Goodkind – Rail Enterprise Project is not a new project, but rather a rebranding to salvage the issues with the Southern Connector. Southern connector project needs to look into the environmental justice principles in Pine, Maple, King neighborhoods. Desire for additional hearings to find out what City wants.
 - Chris Dunkel – Interest in REP as it pertains to the Rambler Building and potential demolition. Concern for greater impact to the buildings and people in the buildings versus Vermont Rail.
 - Jason Adams – Owner of the Independent Block, the commercial building in the area of the Railyard Enterprise Project. Open-minded to the project, but the options for demoing the building are not favorable to him with effects on tenants (roadway location, loading, loss of parking, etc.)
4. **Railyard Enterprise Project – Supplemental Scoping**
 - Eleni Churchill (Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission); Chapin Spencer, Norman Baldwin, Susan Molzon (DPW)
 - Staff Recommendation: Advance engineering under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as a federally funded project. The process would continue in the direction of the original scoping recommendation approved by City Council at December 21, 2015 meeting, to advance three REP alternatives to NEPA.
 - Councilor Discussion
 - Councilor Paulino – Concerns regarding funding amount and timing and how to provide those funds. Separate project from Champlain Parkway, but interrelated. Without the Parkway, REP would be a significant improvement. Choice to keep design local restriction options - are the other options back on the table now? If approved to spend more money upfront, how much change will be allowed to make? It is important to have the sidewalk option in addition to the multimodal. The full Council should get the benefits of looking at this instead of tabling it at committee.
 - Councilor Hanson – This area of town could benefit from some reinvestment. What is the breakdown of federal, state and local money including split between federal and state? Are you maintaining the shared use-path throughout the entirety of the project? What would it cost the City in the next year took the Staff action? Preference is to hold off spending money on this project until the future. Would like to address mentioned in relationship between this project and Champlain Parkway. Are they complementary?
 - Councilor Stromberg – Why was there such a gap between 2015 and now? Concerned about the economics of the projects including the contingency costs.
 - Public Discussion
 - Jacob Albee – Owner of Rambler and where the Waterfront Diving Center is located. Involved in process from the outset, but project has not involved those who are affected nor has it provided an update in years. Vermont Rail only has monetary consequences for the plan, but there are impacts on businesses and people in the area. Building roads is a lousy way to reduce traffic. Issues like the smelly waste water plant would still remain if the project moves forward.
 - Steve Goodkind – Southern Connector is flawed project and needs REP to be successful or needs to be redesigned in a different way. The purpose and needs statement was drawn up to go around Federal rules. There are alternatives that should be discussed instead of pushing things along. If there is going to be a connector project, it needs to be changed to avoid the environmental justice effects.
 - Tony Redington – Agrees with Steve Goodkind. These two projects are connected by history and function. How one continues or changes, it will not be settled tonight. Agree with the motion by Councilors Hanson and Stromberg. Everyone agrees that there should be a walk and bike lanes between Pine and Battery, but the

- conversations changes when cars are involved. Five years ago, the conversation did not involve present day pressures (e-bikes, scooters). Thinking has evolved, and the project should respond to the needs of today.
- Jonathan – Points out there are economic enterprises in this area like Waterfront Diving Center. Understand the need to divert traffic, and sees traffic jams all the time. Attended public meetings and want to express concern that the project would eliminate customer parking and the loading dock. Both are key to the success of his business. He would have to reevaluate this location if this project went forward. Overall, happy with the public outreach, despite the stall.
 - Jason Adams – What sparked this project now? What is new now from what was approved in 2015 and why is the project back to where it was a few years ago? Has the railroad commented on project recently? Why are there so many consultants? Is there the option to change plans (such as sidewalks) later on to ensure parking lot access and tractor trailer access?
 - Karen Yacos – Problem with the design, Variation 3, as the shared use path has railyard and roadway on either side. Could use refuge, protection, or greenery even at expense of path continuity with rest of path. This would be helpful to businesses in the area and encourage activity to visitors to the area.

On Motion by Councilor Hanson (seconded by Councilor Stromberg)

- (1) **Accept the Railyard Enterprise Project Supplemental Scoping Study.**
- (2) **Recommend City Council proceed with REP as a Federally-funded project.**
- (3) **Wait to Proceed on the REP until the Champlain Parkway is completed (FY23 Spring).**

On Motion by Councilor Paulino (seconded by Councilor Hanson)

- **Split original motion into two separate items. Passes Unanimously.**

On Motion by Councilor Paulino (seconded by Councilor Hanson)

- (1) **Accept the Railyard Enterprise Project Supplemental Scoping Study. Passes Unanimously.**
- (2) **Recommend City Council proceed with REP as a Federally-funded project. Passes Unanimously.**

On Motion by Councilor Hanson (seconded by Councilor Stromberg)

- **Wait to Proceed on the REP until the Champlain Parkway is completed (FY23 Spring). Passes – Yes (Stromberg/Hanson), No (Paulino)**

5. Fare-Free Transit

- Nicole Losch (DPW); Chris Damiani (Green Mountain Transit)
- Referenced memo in packet: quick update from January 2020, Councilor Hanson recommended and passed resolution to Council to evaluate fare free transit with a report back to Council by mid-May. Initiated this process, but meetings were postponed due to COVID-19. Committed, but are asking for a six-month extension for this work in November 2020. Provided context of the zero-fare operations GMT has provided during COVID-19 as it relates to the CARES Act.
- Chris – Past two months, the world of transit has changed. Current fare free service, it is hard to use a benchmark for this study, but it has provided distance between drivers and passengers. It appears to also speed up the operations (could be confounded by less traffic), but has given us a partial view into fare-free service in the future. CARES Act provided \$7.6M of Federal funding for PPE for employees and lost revenue. Estimating \$50K in lost revenue weekly during the past two months. The GMT Board did vote to eliminate the proposed 4% assessment increase in FY21 for fixed route service to recognize budgeting challenges that member municipalities are facing.
- Councilor Discussion
 - Councilor Hanson – How long will GMT remain fare-free? Other part of my January resolution asked Burlington Commissioners on GMT to discuss how members and municipalities can join together to create a fare-free system. Are there any discussions to extend fare-free beyond COVID-19? Desire to have Burlington Commissioners on GMT Board to continue to provide regular updates to the TEUC in conjunction with executing on the resolution but extend the timeframe no later than November.

On Motion by Councilor Hanson (seconded by Councilors Paulino and Stromberg)

- **Extension of original resolution but extended deadline to November 2020. Passes Unanimously**

6. Consolidated Collection Study

- Lee Perry (DPW)
- Previously took TEUC's feedback to GBB (consultant) and received firmer version of the analysis. In January 2020, asked Board of Finance and City Council for 6-month extension to contract to complete public meetings and feedback. However, COVID-19 delayed the scheduled meetings on March and April with a presentation to City Council in June.
- Concern with how to reach the public. Remain in contact with GBB, South Burlington, and CSWD.
- Staff has heard from CSWD and South Burlington that this is a less of a priority right now given COVID-19. Staff recognizes the importance of this study for Burlington, but wants to make sure Councilors are fully supportive advancing with public outreach during this time given that there will be limitations on how the public can be engaged.
- Councilor Discussion
 - Councilor Hanson – It sounded like the City was headed forward with public discussions when COVID-19 hit Vermont. This could be the new norm and still need to find a way to advance important items. This is the new environment, and Zoom is actually easier for making it in person. Plenty of attendees tonight. Avoid putting this on hold indefinitely. Still want to move forward via Zoom like everything else. Cost savings and efficiency gains. It connects with the organics mandate this summer and the ability to proceed forward this summer. This transition may not be in place for at least a year. Delay is unfortunate, but it is important to proceed especially given length of process and the importance of money savings and environmental benefits.

- Councilor Stromberg – Agree with Councilor Hanson’s sentiment. If this were pushed off, will this create a timing issue?
- Councilor Paulino – This is a big picture item such that the rollout should be done right.

Next steps: DPW will follow up with our partners. All three members of the TEUC are supportive in DPW advancing the Consolidated Collection public meetings with the goal to wrap up the study as close to June 30 as possible.

7. Quick Build Projects

- Elizabeth Gohringer, Nicole Losche (DPW)
- Quick-build program came out of the 2017 planBTV WalkBike with a desire to create a continuous and connected bike network with pedestrian safety. Quick-build allows achievement of this goal with short-term, flexible projects without large capital outlay. Examples around City: Dewey Park Plaza, Howard St/S Winooski Ave/St. Paul St, One Neighborhood Greenway, N Union St Protected Bike Lane, Main St @ S Champlain St, Bike Box at Pearl St and N Union St.
 - Maintenance has proven to be a challenge. They are designed to last five years, but they cannot withstand winter, car impacts, climate challenges. Graffiti issue has been heard and is an ongoing challenge. Current solution: Traffic team decided they would paint over. Traffic team has done its first round of graffiti cleanup. SeeClickFix is the best place to flag issues. This year there is not any seasonal staff, which could limit response.
- Phasing Quick-Build to Construction this year. Coordinated with other capital projects and other factors.
- Neighborhood Greenways are a sub-project type within Quick-Build focused on low vehicle volume and speeds, prioritizing biking, and safety for pedestrians.
 - Permanent Construction Factors – Timing, Budget. ONE Greenway includes lots of curb extensions which would be expensive, and could be phased over a couple of seasons. The vision is to have as much greenspace as possible, which requires coordination with Water Resources.
 - Feedback – It has been mixed, especially with curb extensions. Some feel safer, and some who feel like it tightens the road. Conflicting feedback resulted in additional intercept surveys on the route. Most respondents felt neutral or they felt that changes as whole were positive.
- Councilor Discussion
 - Councilor Hanson – What are updates for quick builds as it relates to Loomis Street? Are there updates on the eastern part ONE (top of Loomis Street)? Often hear complaints navigating that intersection especially with bikes and cars sharing a narrow space. What is the plan with those quick builds? I find Loomis challenging as a cyclist. It is difficult for different modes of transportation. Quick-builds are helpful for cyclists, but not so much for others (my constituents). Heard a lot during campaign about difficulties. Glad DPW attending the walk-bike council. Overall, love the quick build concept to test ideas beyond paper.

Next Steps – DPW staff will take survey results to the Burlington Walk/Bike council to obtain their responses and feedback. If design does not need to be adjusted, DPW staff would develop construction plans this fall for ONE Greenway.

8. E-Bike Share

- Chapin Spencer, Rob Goulding, Nicole Losch (DPW)
- Director Spencer – DPW has been working with Gotcha to make minor revisions to the contract. The contract is in a good place. DPW was concerned with production issues, but now has news that October 2020 delivery is possible. DPW has past performance with Gotcha’s delivery timelines. DPW meets regularly with Gotcha. Optimistic to meet this deadline.
- Rob – COVID-19 has caused a lag in supply chain issues, but DPW has seen proof of receipt. The City is a priority for the Gotcha market. The City does not fund this project as users would pay for the use of the bikes. One-year program with option to renew. City included additional language to include pandemic language. Timeline agreement: Proof of purchase of bikes, encumbrances permits submittal for the ROW bike stations, then delivery of bikes to market, with it up and running by October 2020. There will still be a 10MPH limit on waterfront. There will be a sign that states the geographic limitations of the bikes and to contact local bike rental shops for longer recreational rides. Escalated pricing may encourage riding use-types.
- Nicole – Gotcha hired a local staff member to be available to local partners. This local staff member just left, but Gotcha is moving ahead with the rehiring process now.

9. DPW Director’s Update

- Director Spencer noted the likely upcoming GMT Commissioner opening.

10. Councilors’ Update

- Councilor Hanson – Desire to explore email updates in greater detail
- Councilor Stromberg – Lots of excitement and potential surrounding upcoming projects.
- Councilor Paulino – No complaints heard during this time period. Looking forward to passing the budget.

11. Next TEUC Meeting

- June 23, 2020 at 5:30 PM.

12. Adjourn

- On Motion by Councilor Paulino (second by Councilors Hanson and Stromberg), meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.