



TO: Burlington City Council Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee
FROM: Charlie Baker, Executive Director, and Eleni Churchill, Transportation Program Manager
Date: November 19, 2019
RE: CCRPC Memo on the Amtrak Train Servicing and Storage Facility Assessment

This memo is in response to various comments regarding CCRPC's work on the Amtrak Train Servicing and Storage Facility Assessment, conducted in collaboration with the City of Burlington (City) and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans). It is intended to further explain and provide a more accurate description of the assessment conducted by CCRPC.

Background - In the spring of 2017, the City and VTrans reached out to the CCRPC asking for technical assistance in evaluating locations in Burlington that could be used to store and service the future Amtrak train overnight. VHB, a pre-qualified consultant with the CCRPC, was hired by CCRPC as the consultant for this study due to its extensive experience with rail and waterfront issues.

Technical Evaluation vs. Plan - In contrast to a planning study where CCRPC works with partners and the community to develop a preferred alternative or recommendations, this study was only a technical evaluation of sites based upon un-weighted criteria which intentionally did not add any policy preferences into the scoring matrix. The objective of the assessment was to identify potential sites, quantify un-weighted impacts and benefits for identified critical areas, develop an evaluation and scoring matrix, and present results to VTrans, the City, stakeholders and the public.

Scoring vs. Recommending - The scoring of the alternative locations should not be considered a recommendation of the assessment or of the CCRPC. The public should provide input to the decision-makers on their preferences and policy choices based upon the assessment and other relevant issues which may not have been included in the assessment.

Public Engagement - To inform the analysis, we held two public meetings. One in November 2017, as part of the City's Public Works Commission meeting, and a second stand-alone public meeting in June 2018. We have heard the accusations that stakeholders and neighbors were not informed of the study or invited to the public meetings. In our opinion, that is not accurate. Indeed, the two public meetings were well attended by interested parties, including Main Street Landing representatives, concerned neighbors from the Wing Building, Lakeview Terrace and others. The study team responded to stakeholder's concerns, expressed during the June 2018 public meeting, by conducting additional analyses on noise and evaluations of other impacts.

Impartial Analysis - We conducted a neutral, impartial, professional analysis of the alternative storage sites, notwithstanding various emails suggesting that VTrans might have a predetermined idea of where the train should be stored. The thoroughness and objectivity of the evaluation is self-evident in even a cursory review of the study and its numerous appendices, which contain detailed results from noise, air quality, visual and other evaluations. The study team (City, VTrans, CCRPC and consultant staff) worked collaboratively throughout this study and there was no coercion from VTrans to alter results in any way.

CCRPC's Role - The CCRPC is an independent organization that has been assisting municipalities in Chittenden County for decades; our well-respected professional staff and consultants do not take instructions from our state partners on how to get to a pre-determined answer. Rather, we take pride in working collaboratively and openly with all our partners and the public during the planning processes we manage. This is precisely how we worked in this instance and we object to any suggestion, by anyone, to the contrary.