



Town of Panton Chartered 1761

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March 9, 2023

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Adam Lougee
Executive Director
Addison County Regional Planning Commission
14 Seminary Street
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Reference: Vergennes Corridor PELS Concepts Development and Screening December 21, 2022

Katharine and Adam:

The Town of Panton has reviewed the corridor options as presented to the Policy Committee on December 21, 2022 and consulted with Town Attorney Benjamin Putnam in drafting this letter.

Panton has many serious concerns regarding the western new roadway routes which include a new bridge over navigable portions of the Otter Creek. These routes are defined as "Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1)", Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 2)", and "Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4)".

Panton is a small, rural community dating back to pre-Revolutionary America. Creating a new highway with a large, elevated bridge that would carve a swath of pavement to funnel large trucks and fast-moving traffic through bucolic farms and fields would irrevocably alter the character of this rural community the lives and livelihoods of its people. Any new highway is not consistent with the land use as documented in the Town Plan. The town plan historically has opposed any route for a potential Vergennes bypass/truck route that crosses into Panton. The Town Plan was updated to recognize the new study but does not currently take a position "supporting or opposing the study and its recommendations".

Concerns with the western route options include noise impacts on a large rural area due to the nature of noise carrying long distances over water, and a disruption/division of the surrounding area due to a long, elevated approach to the potential bridge required to attain maximum grade requirements. Any new developed roadway will also reduce agricultural land used by wildlife for habitat.

Panton would bear undue impact with all of the western options. A stated goal for the study has been to not just move the truck traffic problem to another town. All of the western options effectively move the traffic problem to Panton, and to a lesser extent, Ferrisburgh. The town of Panton has not been provided the opportunity to participate in the down-selection of which options are being carried forward in the study.

Panton is also concerned with any western route as additional truck traffic from the Champlain Bridge would be routed by GPS from VT 17 north on Lake St/Road to Pease Road to Jersey St to Panton Road to the newly constructed highway. This route is designated as part of the Champlain Bikeway and a Scenic Byway and consists of town roads with minimal or no shoulder. It also crosses a bridge over Dead Creek which would cause additional wear on that town asset. Increased truck traffic is not consistent with bicycle traffic on these rural roads. These roads also are heavily used by numerous farms for large/oversize farm equipment, typically slow moving. This would create potential safety issues meeting trucks head on, or if trucks attempt to pass slow moving farm equipment. It is noted that this would be an unintended consequence of any new roadway construction, but prudent planning should include this impact.

A significant portion of Panton property tax is generated by the properties bordering Lake Road. Increased traffic and noise from additional traffic could negatively impact the property values along this corridor, thus impacting taxes for the remainder of the town.

The western and southern borders of the City of Vergennes are currently in dispute as to the location of the boundary. Panton does not support any construction of a new route on land that is currently disputed until such a time that the boundary between Vergennes and Panton has been studied and finalized. At that time, Panton would review this position in conjunction with planning activities for any boundary adjustments.

It is understood that the next meeting of the PELS Policy Committee will include an agenda item to "reach consensus" on the options to carry forward to the next phase of the study. On January 11, 2023 the Panton Representative on the PELS committee requested (email to Catharine Otto and Adam Lougee) a conceptual map of the western routes including the southern approach so that all parties can visualize how this would impact the rural area. The potential unintended traffic increase on the Lake St route was also raised, and it was requested that a traffic study include this issue.

Panton is not currently in a position to vote to carry forward work on any Western Option for a new roadway including an elevated bridge.

Sincerely yours,



Mary Rudd
Planning Commission Chair



Howard Hall
Select Board Chair