

Local Concerns Meeting Notes

November 6, 2023

PROJECT NUMBER: 20230005.S01
PROJECT NAME: Sharon TAP TA23(8)
RE: Local Concerns Meeting
SUBMITTED BY: Jacob Fowler

The following overview is from the Local Concerns Meeting that took place on Tuesday, November 6, 2023, at 6:30 pm in Sharon Elementary School.

Kevin Gish, Chair of the selectboard introduced the project. Following this introduction, Nicole Fox from Fuss & O'Neill made a brief presentation including project limits, process, scope, and schedule.

Project Team includes:

- Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission Municipal Project Manager – Rita Seto, AICP
- Town of Sharon Selectboard Assistant – Nicola Shipman
- VTrans Project Manager – Derek Kenison
- Fuss & O'Neill Project Manager – Nicole Fox, PE
- Fuss & O'Neill – Jacob Fowler, EIT

The purpose of the Local Concerns Meeting is to gather feedback on issues, concerns, and ideas from the public and other stakeholders. After the presentation, the floor was opened for questions, comments, and/or concerns. A summary of that input follows.

Public Questions, Comments, and Concerns:

Summary of Major Concerns:

There was consensus that the existing sidewalks on VT 14 do not have sufficient definition from the road to be safe and that all the sidewalks in the project area need improvement to be accessible and safe. Many attendees had similar concerns related to the excessive speed and volume of traffic on VT 14. Residents noted the number of vehicles on VT 14 appeared to have increased recently and several people expressed concern about the speed of traffic, particularly that drivers are exceeding the posted speed limits of 35 mph on VT 14 and 25 mph on VT 132. Several attendees also expressed their concerns that drivers are making dangerous maneuvers when entering and exiting Maplefields and the Sharon Trading Post at several driveways and are not noticing pedestrians in the area. These businesses are situated at the intersection of VT 14 and VT 132 and the store/gas station has two driveways near the intersection on VT 14 and a third on VT 132.

Individual Comments:

- The presence of pedestrian traffic on VT 14 in areas without any existing sidewalk was identified as a concern by one participant. They also noted there is pedestrian traffic on River Road that crosses the bridge without sidewalks.
- A resident noted the presence of a large amount of truck traffic on VT 14, some of which may be originating at a trucking company located on VT 14.
- An attendee noted that School Street also needs to be made safer for pedestrians. Children walk from VT 132 to both schools and between Sharon Elementary and Sharon Academy but there is no path or sidewalk for those routes, forcing pedestrians to walk either in the road or the grass.
- The safety of biking on VT 14 was noted as a concern for residents because there is no dedicated space outside the travel lanes. Bicyclists turning left onto VT 132 from VT 14 have a difficult time merging into traffic.
- A new crosswalk from Maplefields to the Village Green across VT 132 was suggested by a resident.
- One participant said that crossing Fay Brook Road at the intersection with VT 14 is difficult because it is quite wide, creating a long crossing distance.
- There were multiple comments that some residents needing to cross VT 14 to access their mailboxes on the far side of the road and that is dangerous because of the volume and speed of traffic.

Questions and Answers

- A participant asked if VT 14 is a state-controlled highway within the village limits. Another person asked later if the Town could take control of VT 14 as Class 1 Town Highway.
 - VT 14 was confirmed to be a state highway and it was stated the Town is not interested in taking control of the route because of the additional administration and expense required to maintain it.
- An attendee asked whether the project would be able to include adding any crosswalks across state highways.
 - Fuss & O'Neill confirmed that it is possible, but it requires a study and justification. The scoping study underway is the type of study that could be used for justification of a crosswalk.
- Another participant asked if it would be likely that any improvements will be made in the project area given that a previous study had not resulted in any changes and because the state-controlled roads require following state processes.
 - Fuss & O'Neill noted that we work with VTTrans through the scoping project process and discuss potential improvement recommendations with them to confirm that they are considered a reasonable approach that could successfully be funded through competitive grant programs and implemented. The goal of the scoping process is to provide the Town with recommendations and phasing to help them make meaningful improvements to pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility.

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- Several residents noted that many drivers exceed the posted speed limits and asked whether the speed limits could be lowered.
 - Fuss & O'Neill explained that changing speed limits requires a separate speed study but given that drivers are already exceeding the posted speed limits, lower speed limits would likely not be recommended because speed limits are most frequently set based on 85th percentile speed. Posting lower speed limits is not an effective way to change driver behavior, but traffic calming measures can be effective and will be included in the alternatives developed for this study.

Local Concerns Meeting, November 6, 2023

Sharon Elementary School

Sharon Village Scoping Study - Please sign in

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