Rep. Diane Lanpher, Chair House Transportation

T-bill H.433 highlights – 2021 session

June 14, 2021

The Transportation bill (T-bill) authorizes the operating and capital funding to the

VT Agency of Transportation (Vtrans) that provide a wide variety of transportation functions and services. House Transportation authorizes/approves the T-bill funding which is then reflected in the Big Bill or full budget. Budgets and policy are combined in the T-bill and this year is no different with H.433 containing the FY’22 budget for Vtrans, along with session law language and some statutory changes.

Some of the highlights of H.433 include:

* Federal COVID aid and its flexibility helped to ease the continuous structural revenue issues the t-fund has been experiencing for years. Federal funds made several one-time investments possible.
* H.433 invests one-time tfunds in the following ways:
  + **$3m** – Increase to Town Highway Aid for FY22 above the statutory requirement for one year. This aid is based on the number of miles of Class 1,2, and 3 roads in a community.
  + **$3.25m** – Electric Vehicle Incentive program for New PEV, <https://www.driveelectricvt.com/why-go-electric/purchase-incentives>
  + **$750k** – Mileage Smart program, <https://www.mileagesmartvt.org>
  + **$375k** – reestablish the Emission Repair program for one year in DEC
  + **$1.5m**- Replace Your Ride, new program aids switching to cleaner transportation
  + **$50k** – Electric Bicycle incentive -first 250 with a $200 incentive
  + **$1m** – Level 2 charging stations, pilot program for Multi-unit dwellings
  + **Zero Fare** – Public transit has funding to provide zero fares through all of FY22
  + **$4m** –Complete Streets in Downtown Fund within the Big Bill
  + **$400k**- support to New Haven to move rail station
* Strong support of Paving in FY22 ($**120m)** which will pave 258 miles on VT roads
* Maintenance budget is healthy with (**$103m**) significant amount for FY22
* Requires further budgeting for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail maintenance costs for the 93 miles of trail, scheduled to be completed in 2022.
* Requires preparation of a long-range plan for the conversion of VT’s Public transportation fleet to an all-electric fleet.
* Requires a study and report back on the use of Automated traffic law enforcement in work zones.
* Requires electric distribution utilities to introduce EV-specific rates
* Improves the coordination between local and state authorities of site plan approvals.
* Transportation Equity Framework – analysis of the state’s existing transportation program and develop a recommendation that the Vtrans can use to, advance mobility equity, increase access to mobility options – reduce air population – enhance economic opportunity to Vermonters in communities that have been underserved by the state’s transportation system.
* Permanent increase to the Town Highway Structures grant program and to the Class 2 Town Highway grants along with a permanent increase to the max grant allowance from $175K to $200K.
* Federal aid awarded in Dec 2020, can be carried forward. There is about $15m left to be used in FY’23.

Transportation related investments with federal ARPA dollars in (Big Bill) FY’22Budget:

* DMV IT system project - $24.5m
* Clean water/phosphorus planning - $3m
* Municipal Mitigation Assistance Program - $500k
* Mileage Smart - $500k

With Transportation accounting for 44 percent of the carbon emissions, and in order to meet our aggressive goals, we must provide Vermonters with the tools to transition to cost effective electrified transportation options. The main barriers to adoption of electric vehicles are typically higher purchase prices and distance between charging stations. H.433 continues to build on the work of previous years to address these barriers.

It will be important to watch the activities in DC, specifically the direction of the infrastructure proposal and what it could bring to VT. Also, the federal tbill expires in Sept 2021 and a new five-year bill is in the development and this I hope will bring additional federal dollars to VT. The VT Climate Council continues to work on their recommendations with their report due out before the Legislature’s return in Jan 2022. I look forward to bringing those recommendation forward in House Transportation in the next session.