



Vergennes Planning and Environment Linkages Study

ACRPC TAC meeting

June 21, 2023

Katharine Otto, VTrans Project Manager



Agenda

1. Previous planning efforts
2. What is a PEL study and why are we doing it?
3. What will we be doing?
4. Who will be involved? Who will be making decisions?
5. What has been considered so far?
6. What comes next?
7. Questions and comments

V E R G E N N E S

Planning & Environment Linkages (PEL) Study



What are we trying to achieve at this TAC meeting?

We are not looking for a decision!

Today we would like to

- Share updates on the study
- Give high level overview of what we've heard so far
- Seek your feedback
- Give information about where to find more details and get connected

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Previous planning efforts



Previous Planning Efforts

1995 Vergennes Route 22A Bypass Study

- Three potential bypass corridors
- Settled on Alignment B ~ 2.5 miles, includes a new bridge over the Otter Creek
- Approximate cost - \$52 million

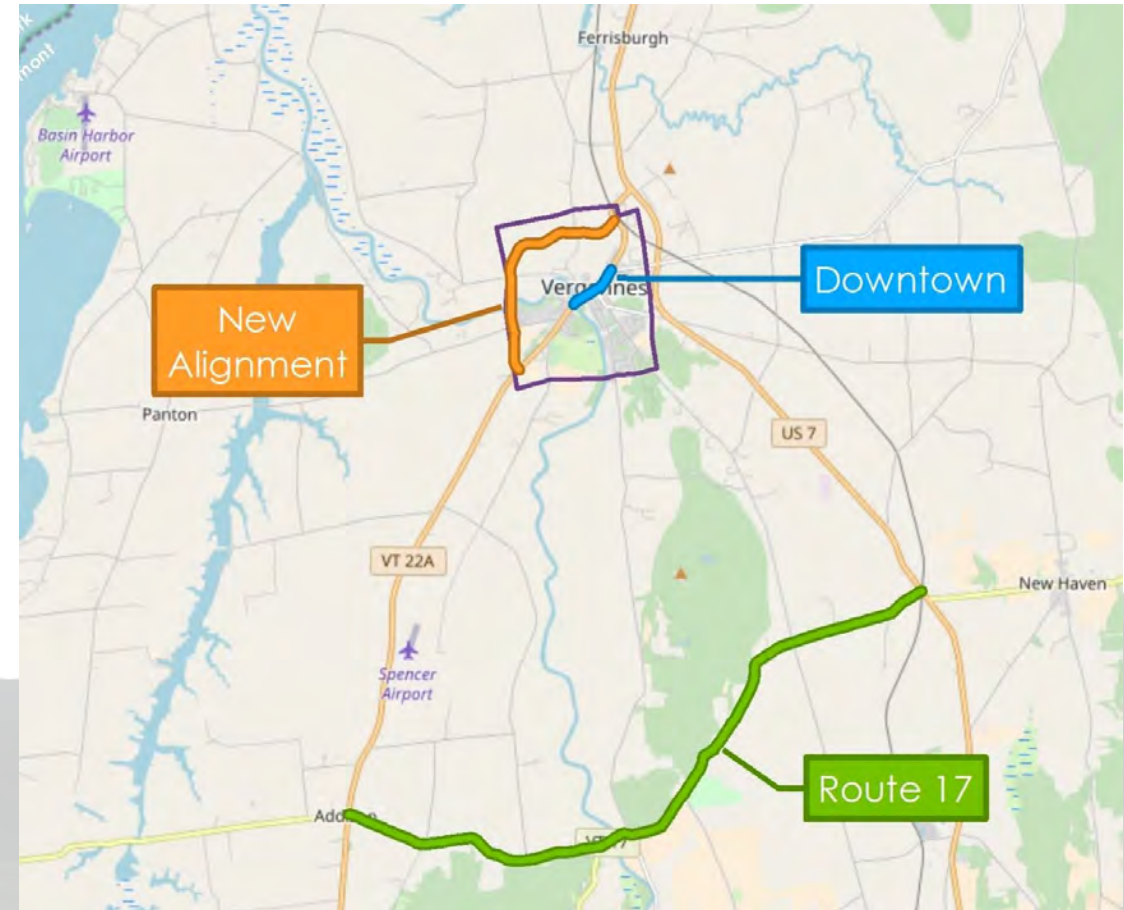
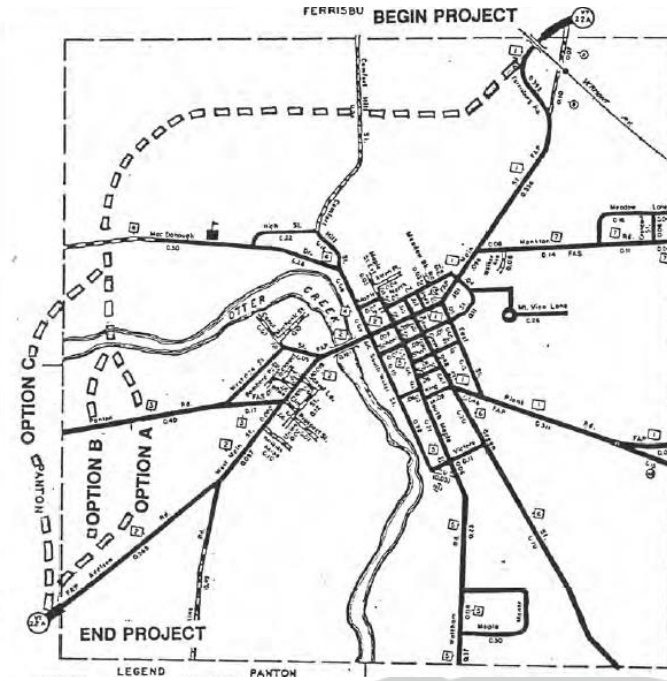
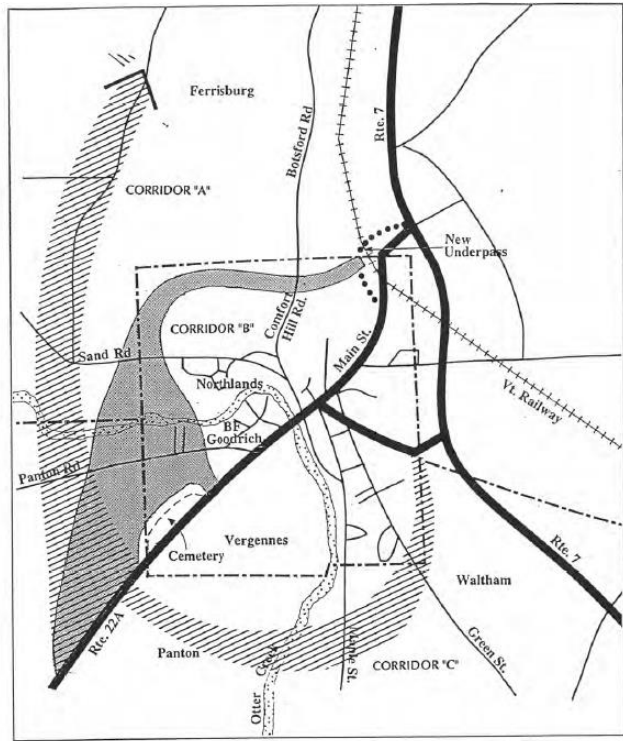
2002 Vergennes Traffic Impact Study – Public Workshop/Brainstorming

- Downtown Mitigation
- Western Bypass
- Alternative Routes
- Transportation System Solutions
- Status Quo

2019 VT 22A Truck Route Study

- Agreement that the truck issue needs to be addressed
- Support for New Alignment
- VT AOT Secretary Flynn commits to PELs with letters of support from legislative bodies in six surrounding Towns
- Funding for PEL in AOT 2021 Capital Program approved by General Assembly

Previous Planning Efforts





**What is a PEL study and why
are we doing it?**



What is a Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) study?

- PEL is a collaborative decision-making **planning** process that considers environmental, community, and economic goals
- Goal to reduce the number of alternatives and identify potential impacts that will be looked at further during federal environmental review (NEPA)



Recommendations only – not binding until NEPA process

What are the Benefits of the Vergennes PEL?



Streamlines efforts
from Planning
into NEPA



Shortens timelines for
NEPA review and
project delivery



Stimulates the
development of
new tools



Helps identify
stakeholders early
in the process



Fosters relationships
among agencies and
the public



Engages non-
transportation
agencies in decision-
making



Creates better real-
world outcomes for
the community



Improves planning
products that improve
the NEPA process

Why are we doing a PEL study in Vergennes?

- Previous studies indicated regional agreement that truck volume in downtown Vergennes should be addressed.
- PEL study allow us to go:
 - Wider in our outreach and engagement
 - Deeper into details, including conceptual design and land use

Goal is for region to come to *consensus* on path forward

- VTrans and ACRPC role in PEL study is to facilitate regional process, NOT to decide path forward



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What will we be doing?



Overall Process – Planning through Construction

PROJECT INITIATION

- PEL Study – complete in 2024
- Funding Authorization – *unknown timeline*

Unknown timeline



PROJECT DEFINITION

- Conceptual Design
- Environmental Studies including NEPA

3-5 years



PROJECT DESIGN

- Preliminary Design
- Permitting
- Right-of-Way Acquisitions
- Final Design

4-8 years



CONSTRUCTION

- Pre-Construction Activities
- Active Construction

2-4 years

Summer 2021 - Winter 2022

Task : Project Kick-Off and Scope Refinement

Task 2: Purpose and Need Statement



Winter 2022 - Winter 2023

Task 3: Alternatives Initial Screening



Winter 2023 - Summer/ Fall 2023

Task 4: Alternatives/ Concept
Refinement

Task 5: Integrated Transportation &
Land Use Alternatives

Task 6: Alternatives Evaluation &
Recommendations



Fall 2023 - Summer 2024

Task 7: Implementation Plan

Task 8: PEL Report

Purpose and Need Statement: Vergennes PEL Study

The ***purpose*** is to reduce the impacts of through truck traffic, including safety, congestion, noise, vibration, and dust on Route 22A in downtown Vergennes. Transportation solutions that reduce truck related quality of life impacts should also meet the mobility, safety, and economic vitality needs of Vergennes and the neighboring communities. A summary of the ***needs*** identified are detailed below.



Mobility and Access: Maintain opportunities for the movement of freight in the region and minimize and/or mitigate traffic impacts to other transportation corridors



Safety, Circulation and Resilience: Support the continued movement, resilience and safety of travel through downtown Vergennes and in the neighboring communities.



Quality of Life: Improve the quality of life and minimize negative property and environmental resource impacts in downtown Vergennes and neighboring communities.



Land Use: Support local and regional land use plans and policies and state land use goals.



Economic Vitality: Promote economic vitality of downtown Vergennes, goods movement in Vergennes and neighboring communities, and support rural economy.



Who is involved?

Who will be making decisions?



VTrans and Study Team Role



Vermont Agency of Transportation

Role

Fund and manage study, consider study conclusions and recommendation of the Policy Committee on how to proceed with implementation, approve next steps as relevant

Members

VTrans Leadership



Study Team

Role

Guide study, write memos and engage stakeholders to provide information for the Technical Committee to consider

Members

VTrans Project Manager – Katharine Otto

Team includes VTrans, ACRPC, WSP, D&K and VHB staff

Other Roles



Technical Committee

Guide, review, and validate the consultant's methods, analyses, findings, and recommendations on which the Policy Committee will make its decisions

Members

Subject matter experts from VTrans, region, and municipalities



Agency Coordination

Guide coordination activities through the duration of the study with interested, involved agencies that may be likely cooperating and participating agencies under NEPA

Members

Likely Cooperating and Likely Participating Agencies



Policy Committee

Endorse key assumptions and recommendations to VTrans

Members

Municipal representatives, VTrans, ACRPC, FHWA

Stakeholders representing business and economic development, the environment, pedestrian and bicycle users and potentially other interests.



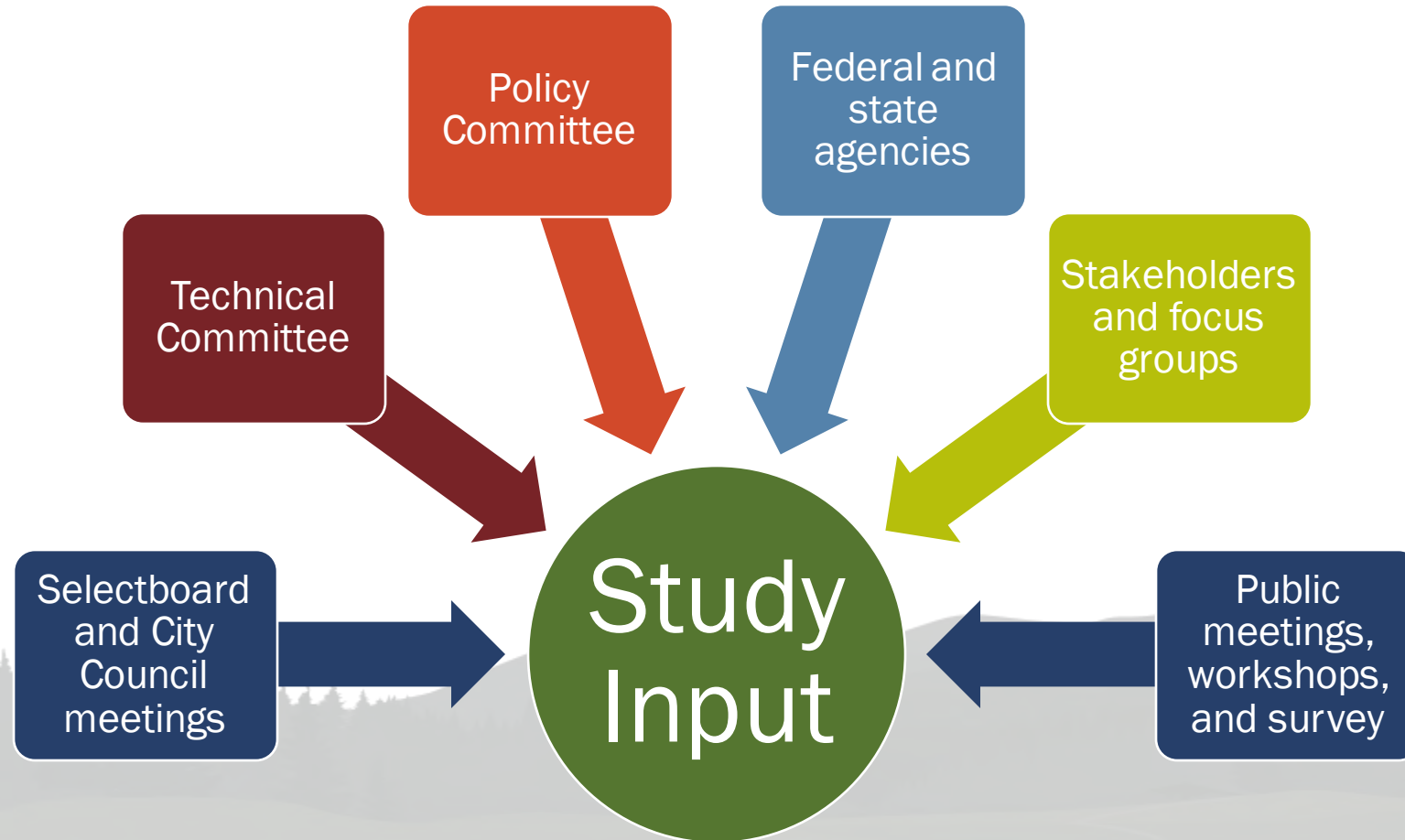
General Public

Provide local input, knowledge, and preferences to support the technical work and decision-making process

Members

Residents of Vergennes and the surrounding communities, businesses in the region, the trucking industry

Collaborative Approach



What does consensus mean?

Levels of Consensus

1. I like it, am on board and can easily accept this decision.

2. I accept this decision but may have some questions/points to clarify at a later time.

3. I can live with this decision even though it may not be my preferred option.

This is our goal for everyone

4. I don't agree but I will not block this decision.

5. I loathe it and cannot accept this decision.



Source: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/levels-consensus-group-decision-making-success-leah-mether/>



What has been considered so far?



Purpose and Need Statement: Vergennes PEL Study

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Screening Criteria

Quality of Life and Environment



- ☐ Reduces truck noise and emissions
- ☐ Avoids potential impacts to water and natural resources
- ☐ Maintains/supports community character of downtown Vergennes

Equity



- ☐ Balances distribution of transportation resources
- ☐ Avoids impacts to surrounding communities, including disproportionate impacts to environmental justice communities

Mobility and Access



- ☐ Maintains freight mobility throughout the region
- ☐ Promotes greater destination access to downtown Vergennes to for all modes

Economic Vitality



- ☐ Promotes economic vitality in downtown Vergennes
- ☐ Promotes regional economic vitality

Safety, Circulation and Resilience



- ☐ Creates redundancies to improve resilience of road network
- ☐ Improves motorized circulation throughout the region
- ☐ Improves non-motorized circulation throughout the region
- ☐ Improves motorized and non-motorized safety on Route 22A through downtown Vergennes

Land Use



- ☐ Consistent with existing regional land uses
- ☐ Aligns with future and projected regional land uses and statewide goals

Initial Screening

Concept Screening Results	Systemwide	VT-17 / Route 7	VT-22A Corridor Improvements	VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (Purple)	Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1) (Red)	Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 2) (Turquoise)	Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3) (Pink)	Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4) (Blue)	Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) (Green)	Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route (Orange)	Rail Mode Options	Water Mode Options	Smart Freight Solutions
Total Score	5	1	-3	6	1	5	5	7	0	6	0	-7	5
Meets Purpose and Need and No Fatal Flaws	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

Secondary Screening Methodology



Human Considerations

- Residential properties
- Nursing homes, hospitals/medical centers
- Government and educational facilities
- Cemeteries
- Historic buildings/structures
- Hazardous sites



Natural and Water Resources

- Rivers and streams
- Vermont defined River Corridors
- Vermont designated significant wetlands class 2 and advisory wetlands
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood hazard areas

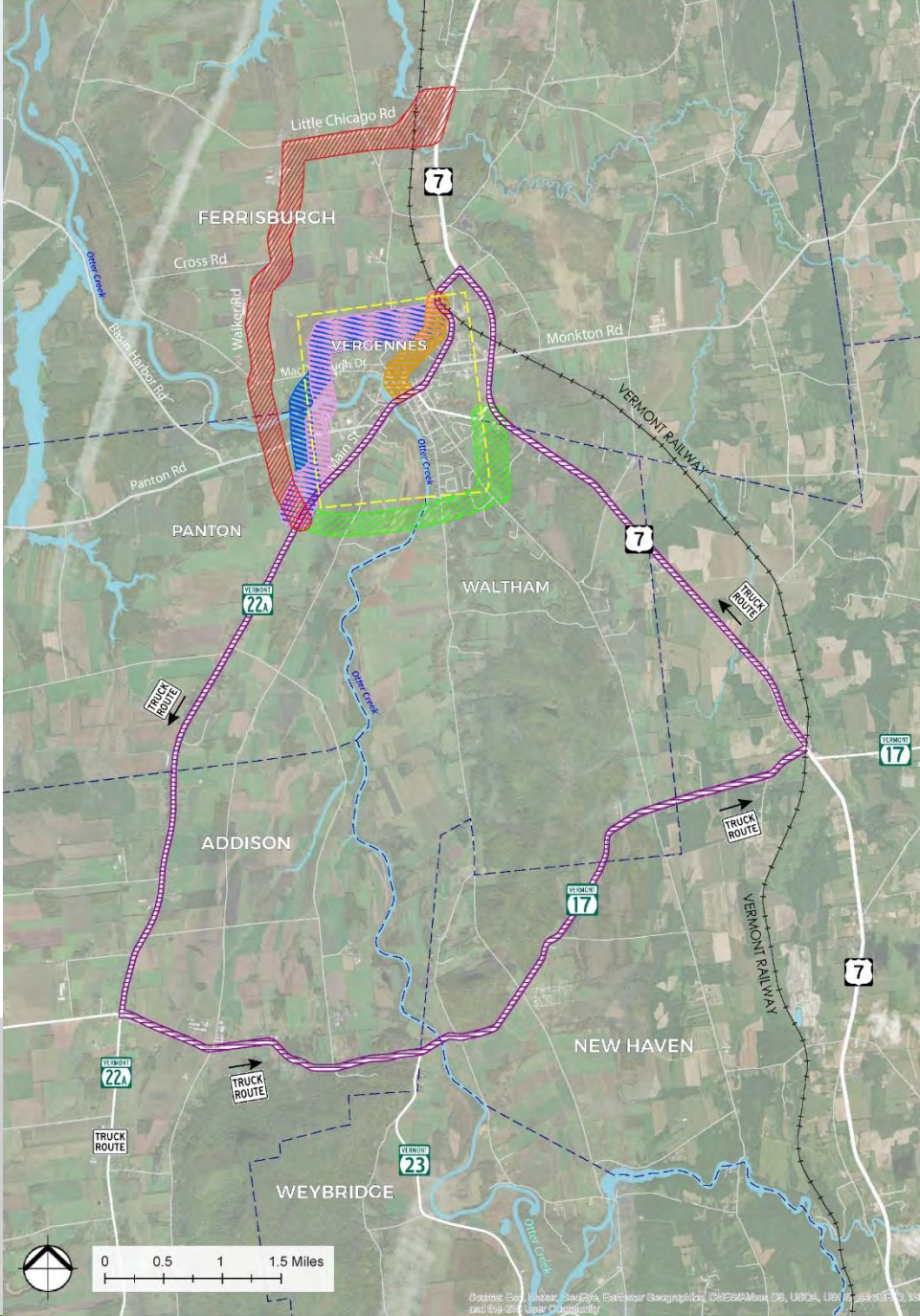


Protected Lands and Agricultural Resources




- Local and state prime agricultural soils
- Conserved land
- Wildlife management area
- State and municipal land

Secondary Screening

Concept	VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound (Purple)	Panton-Ferrisburgh New Roadway (West Routing Option 1) (Red)	Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3) (Pink)	Vergennes-Panton New Roadway (West Routing Option 4) (Blue)	Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) (Green)	Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route (Orange)
Screening Results						
Meets Purpose and Need and No Fatal Flaws	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recommended to move forward for further study	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Secondary Screening Results for concepts which are moving forward

	Pink/Blue - Vergennes New Roadway (West Routing Option 3 & Option 4)	Green - Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing)	Orange - Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route	Purple - VT-17 Northbound/VT-22A Southbound
Type of construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New roadway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New roadway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New roadway and full depth reconstruction following parts of the existing right-of-way on MacDonough Drive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some roadway widenings and intersection improvements along the existing right-of-way on Route 22A, Route 17, and Route 7
Roadway Length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. 3 miles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. 3 miles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. 1 mile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approx. 20 miles
Property Impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium – less than 50 properties likely impacted Possible impacts to mobile-home park [Pink route] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium – less than 50 properties likely impacted Possible Impacts to school near New Haven Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium - less than 50 properties likely impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium – less than 50 properties likely impacted
Environmental & Permitting Impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts to agricultural lands and protected lands Potential impacts to wetlands, protected species May require a Section 408 permit for new Otter Creek crossing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts to agricultural lands Potential impacts to wetlands, protected species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts to agricultural lands and protected lands Potential impacts to wetlands, protected species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts to agricultural lands and protected lands Potential impacts to wetlands, protected species
Existing Conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No existing roadway Land surrounding potential new roadway is mostly open and agricultural land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No existing roadway Land surrounding potential new roadway is mostly open and agricultural land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No existing roadway Land surrounding potential new roadway and existing road is mostly open land with a section of residential land in southern section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing 2-lane roadway with shoulder on Route 22A, Route 17, and Route 7 Rail Crossing at Route 17 and Route 7 Land surrounding roadway is a mix of residential land and agricultural land

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What comes next?



What Comes Next?

Concept Engineering

- Design constraints including existing ROW and land use, environmental resources, location of adjacent roadways, municipal boundaries

Transportation and Land Use Integration

- Local land use controls/zoning, economic conditions and growth trends, environmental constraints

Evaluation of Concepts

- Traffic impacts, multi-modal considerations
- Environmental impacts – wetlands, floodplains, habitats, noise

Land Use Visioning



Public Outreach

- Community Liaison
- Survey (late summer)
- Coordination meetings

Community Liaison Corner

Considering the Future of Vermont 22A An Introduction and an Update

June 2, 2023

Considering the Future of Vermont 22A An Introduction and an Update

This year and next will likely prove to be a pivotal period in the ongoing debate about how to reduce the impact of truck traffic traveling Vermont's Route 22A through Vergennes.

If you've been following the progress of the Vergennes PEL Study—PEL stands for Planning & Environment Linkages; we'll get into that in a future update—you'll be familiar with the general outline of the study but perhaps not with the full scope of the PEL process and the study team's goals in following this process.

And you probably have questions and concerns about the alternative roadways under consideration.

Your Community Liaison

My name is Jim Gish and I joined the team conducting the PEL Study in April to serve as your Community Liaison on the study. My job in essence is designed to ensure two things:

1. That all community members fully understand the goals and process of the PEL Study; and
2. That all community voices are heard by the study team.



JOIN THE EMAIL LIST

Contact us! For more information about the Vergennes PEL study, please contact the study team. If you would like to subscribe to our email list, please fill [out the contact form](#)



UPCOMING MEETINGS

Vergennes PEL Study Technical Committee & Coordinating Agencies Meeting

Time: June 21, 2023 1:00 PM Eastern Time
(US and Canada)

Via Zoom Meeting

*Meeting information available upon request,
please email vergennespel@gmail.com.

Schedule

- Concept Design
- Land Use Visioning
- Alternatives Refinement



Where can I find out more?

- <https://vergennespel.com/>
 - Committee member lists and materials
 - Meeting recordings
 - Documents
 - New Community Liaison Blog!
- Sign up for the project email list! <https://vergennespel.com/contact/>

Reach out if you have specific questions or concerns – we'd be happy to email or meet!

Questions and Comments?



We welcome your input and appreciate your feedback.

Please visit <https://vergennespel.com/> to join our email list for Study updates

Please visit email us at vergennespel@gmail.com for further information, to submit comments or to contact the Study team.



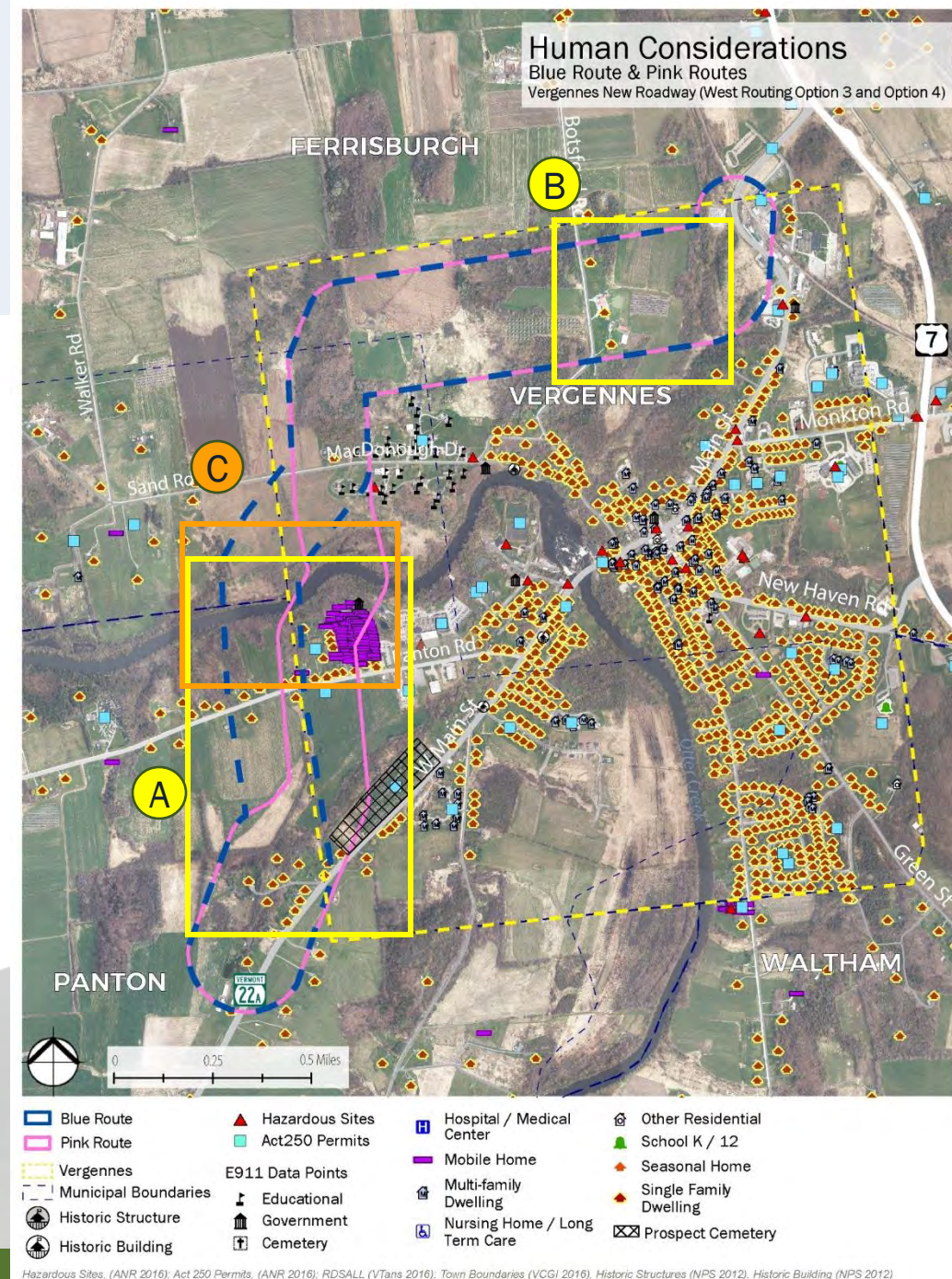
**Additional details in case they
are useful**

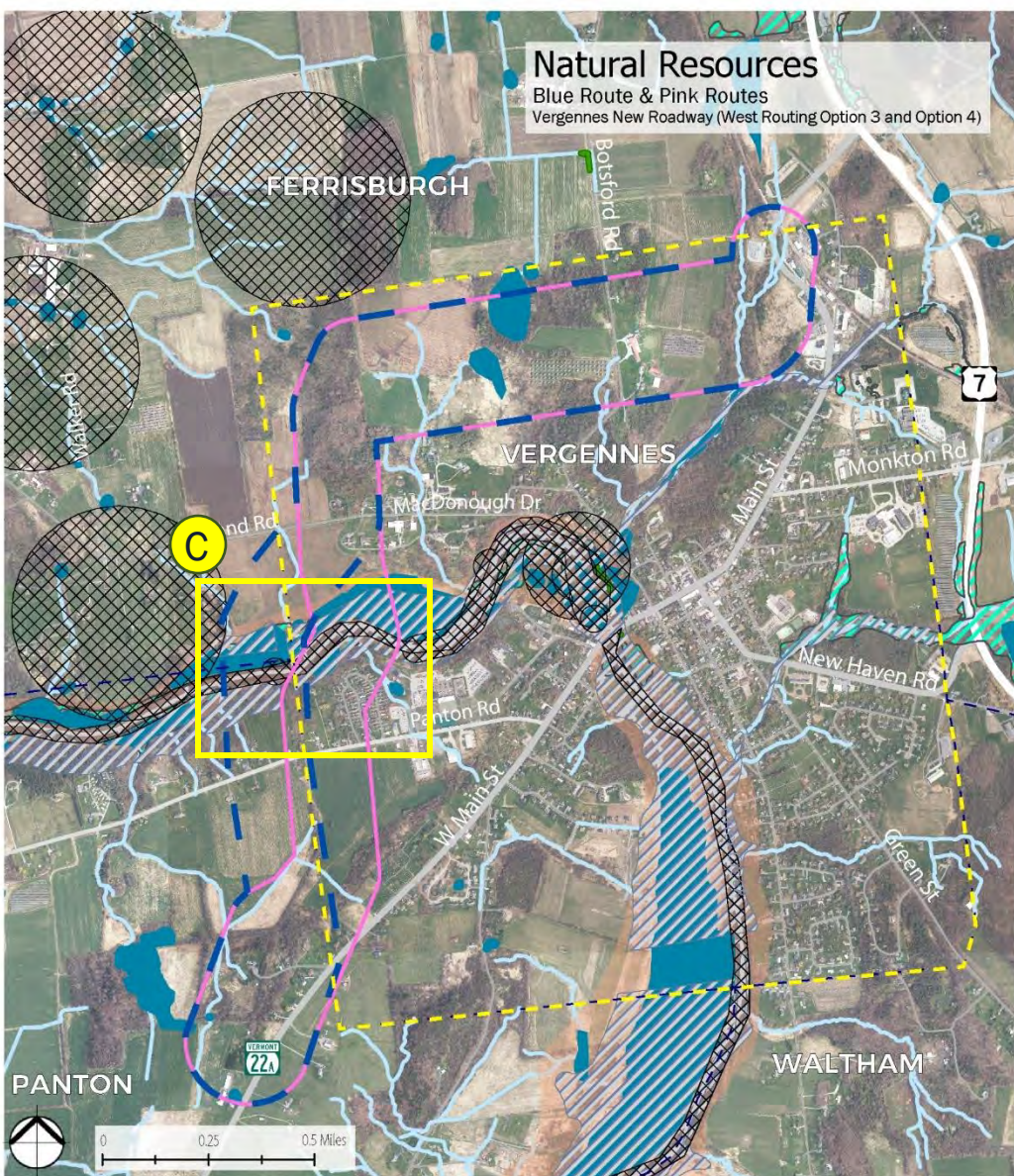


Vergennes-Panton New Roadway [Blue and Pink routes]

Items highlighted in secondary screening

- Residential properties located nearby (A and B)
- Private conserved land (B)
- Crossing downstream of the falls may be more challenging (C)

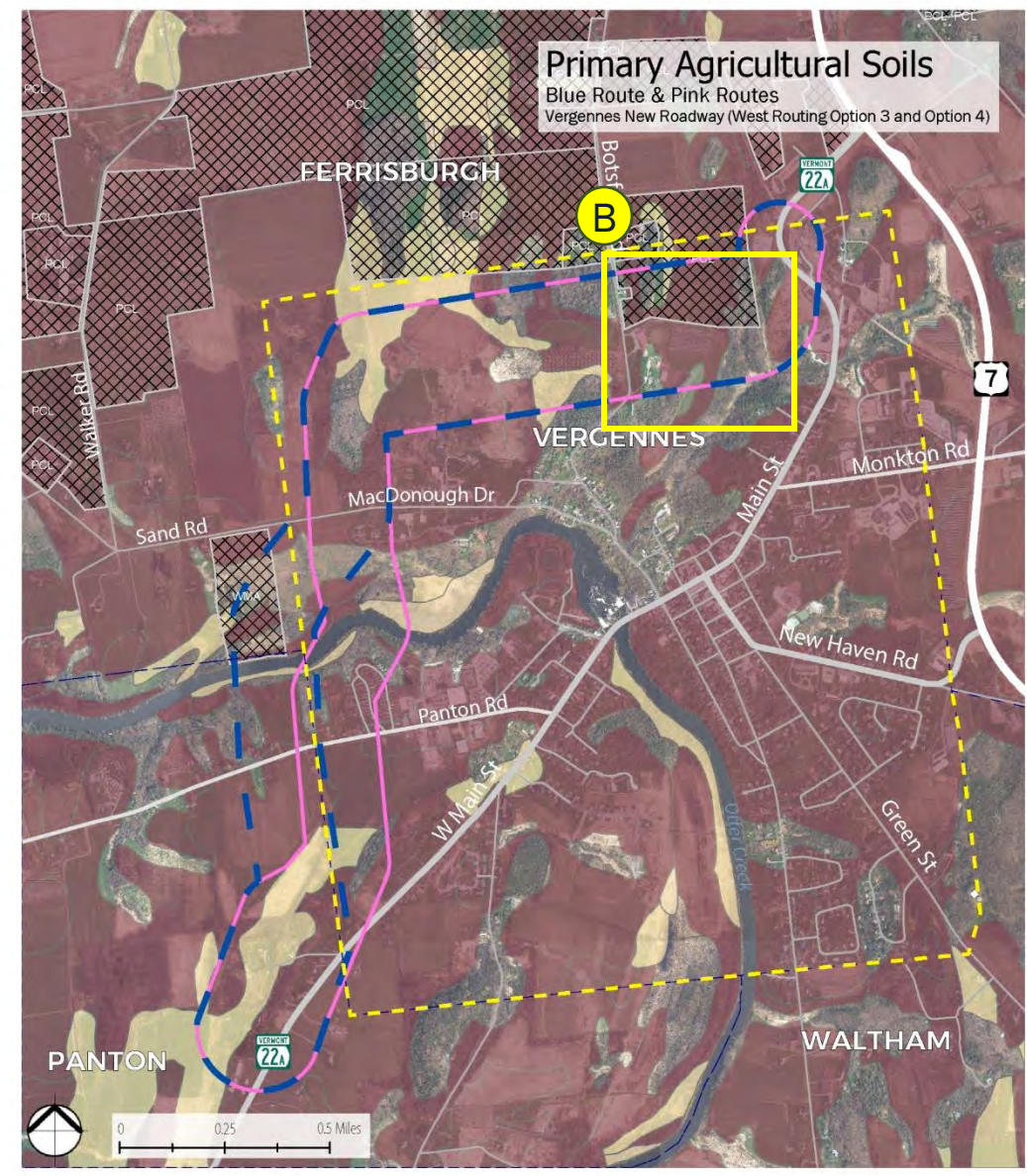




- Blue Route
- Pink Route
- Vergennes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Rivers & Streams
- Rare, Threatened & Endangered Animal
- FEMA Flood Hazard Areas
- River Corridors
- VT Significant Wetlands Inventory (Class 2)
- VT Significant Wetlands Inventory (Advisory Wetlands)

Data Sources: FEMA Flood Hazard Areas (ANR 2022); VT Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species (VNHI 2023); River Corridors, (ANR 2019); Rivers & Streams (USGS 2021); VT VSWI, (VCGI2020); VTORTHO (VCGI 2022)

Blue and Pink routes



- Blue Route
- Pink Route
- Vergennes
- Municipal Boundaries
- Primary Agricultural Soils
- Local Prime Agricultural Soils (b)
- Prime Agricultural Soils
- Statewide Prime Agricultural Soils
- Protected Lands
- Protected Land Classifications
- PCL = Private Conserved Land
- WMA = Wildlife Management Area
- ML = Municipal Land

Data Sources: Agriculturally Important Soil Units (VCGI 2021); VT Protected Lands Database (VCGI 2021); VTORTHO (VCGI 2022)

VT-17 Northbound/VT 22A Southbound [Purple route]

Items highlighted in secondary screening

- Areas surrounding roadway are developed
- Small sections of state wetlands adjacent to the roadways

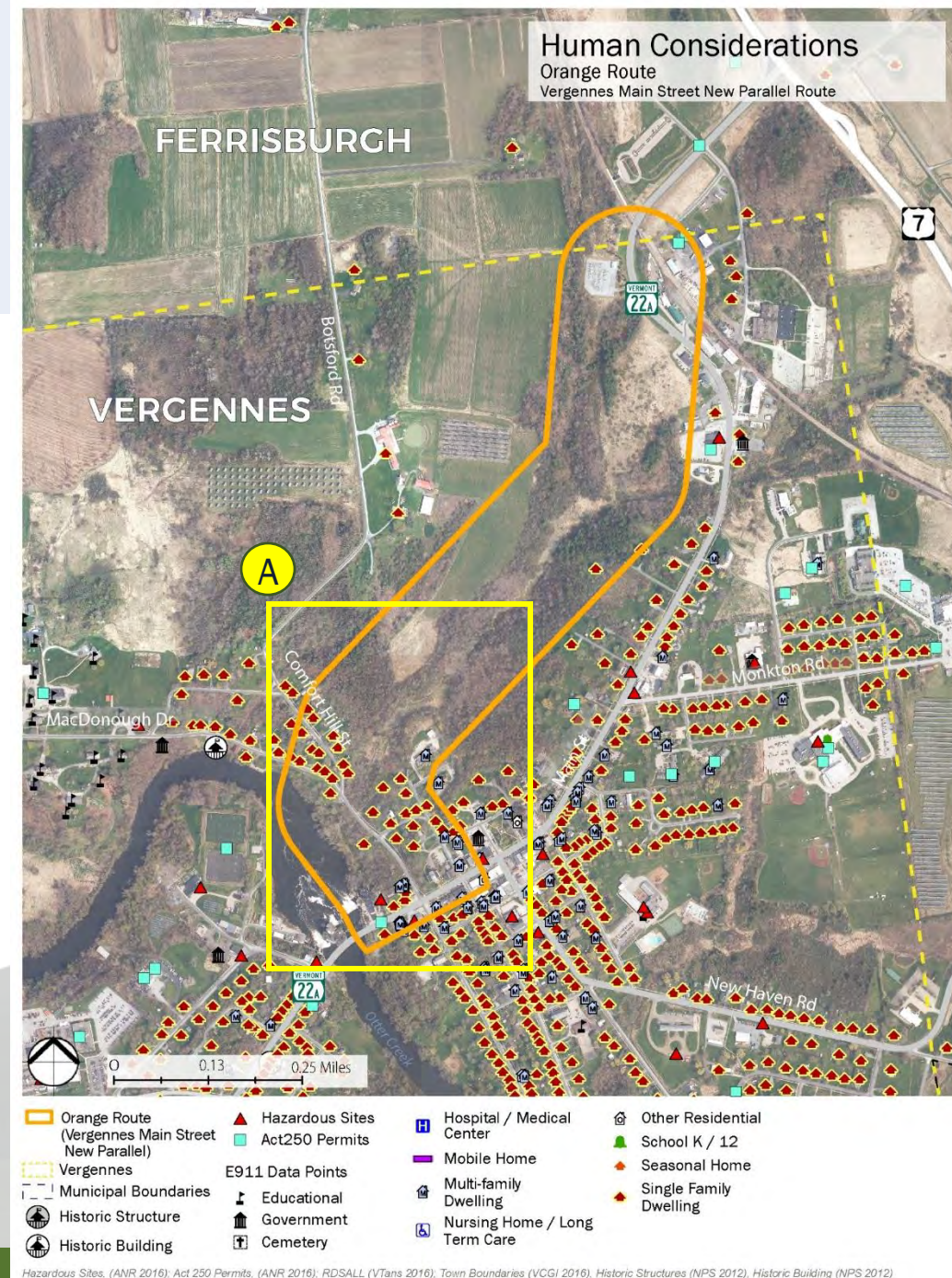


Data Sources: FEMA Flood Hazard Areas (ANR 2022); VT Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species (VNH 2023); River Corridors, (ANR 2019); Rivers & Streams (USGS 2021); VT VSWI, (VCGI/2020); VTORTHO (VCGI 2022)

Vergennes Main Street New Parallel Route [Orange route]

Additional feasibility review

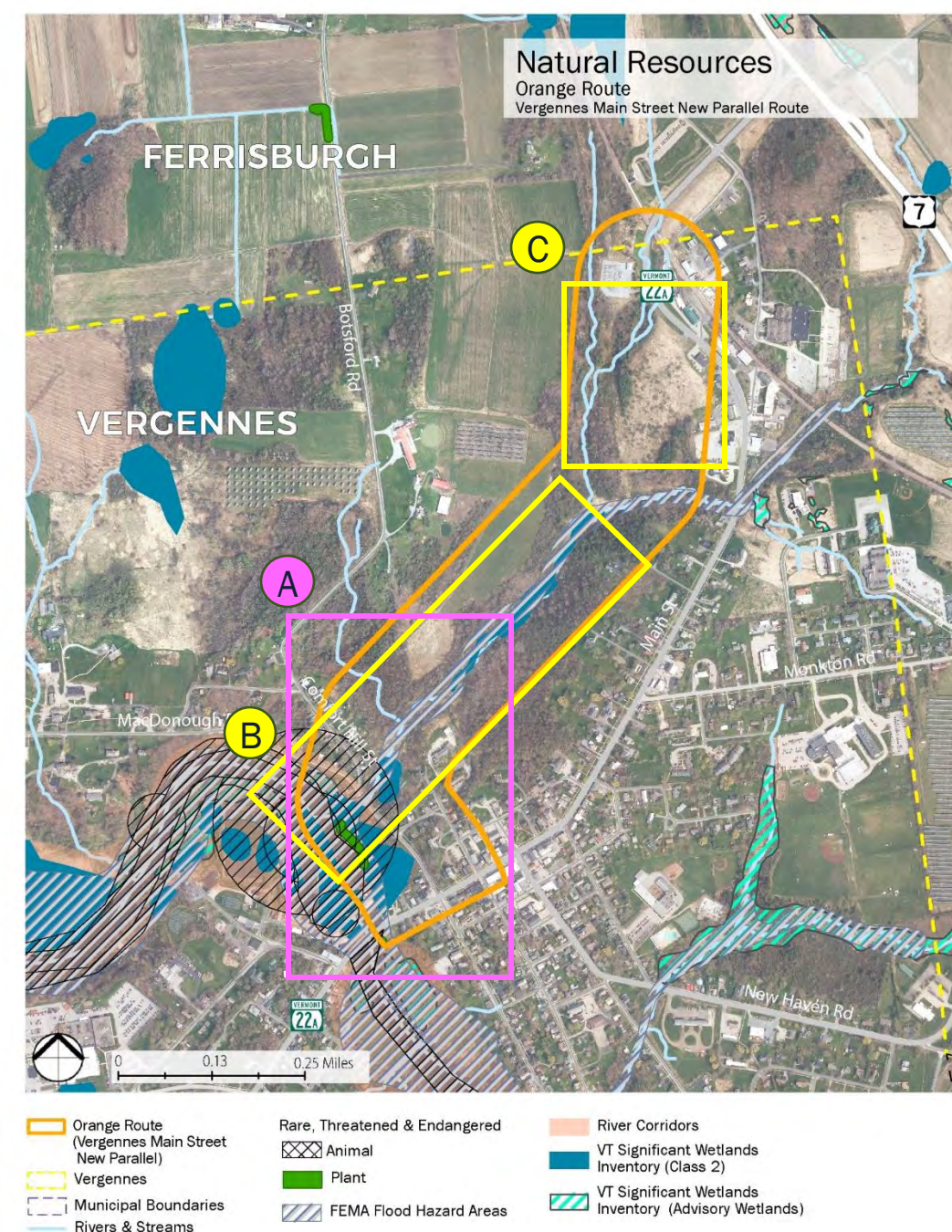
- Reviewed existing conditions to determine the feasibility of new roadway construction
 - Utilizing existing roadway and new alignment near MacDonough Drive
- Following state and federal design standards, the route is feasible (no greater than 6%) though challenging
 - Feasibility and traffic engineering will continue to be analyzed throughout the PEL Study



Orange route (continued)

Items highlighted in secondary screening

- Within the City of Vergennes, route is proximate to several single-family residences (A)
- Area southwest of the concept includes portions of Otter Creek, FEMA flood hazard areas, and Vermont significant wetlands (Class 2) (B)
- Northeast is a stream and smaller sections of flood hazard area & class 2 wetlands that extend to the southernmost point of a group of streams in the northern area of the concept (C)



Panton-Vergennes-Waltham New Roadway (Southeast Routing) [Green route]

Items highlighted in secondary screening

- Throughout the western segment of the concept, there is a concentration of streams and the areas west and east of the proposed new Otter Creek crossing are designated as flood hazard areas as well as state wetlands (A)
- East of the wetland area there is a habitat for freshwater mussels (B)
- The new Otter Creek crossing upstream of the Vergennes Falls may be less challenging than the proposed crossings downstream (Red Route, Blue/Pink Route) (B & C)
- There is a school near the intersection of Church Street and Route 7 in Vergennes and a cluster of residential properties (C)

