



Bennington County Regional Commission

News and Notes

January 2022

January 20 - BCRC Meeting: Public Transportation and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

This month's meeting of the BCRC will take place at 5:30 PM on Thursday, January 20 via ZOOM (login info below; if you would like to attend in-person we will have someone at the BCRC office conference room).

Terrence White, Executive Director of the The Green Mountain Community Network, Inc., will provide an overview of GMCN services, new developments, and a look at the future. GMCN is a private not-for-profit organization founded in 2007 to manage the Green Mtn. Express, which has safely and efficiently provided transportation services in and around Bennington County since 1985. Overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors and experienced management team, GMCN is funded in part by the State of Vermont Transportation Budget, the Federal Transit Administration, and Medicaid. The Green Mountain Express (GMX) is the leading transportation alternative for area residents. GMX is a full service transit provider, offering deviated fixed bus routes, demand response, Medicaid, Reach-up, elder/disabled transportation and private pay services. The GMX System is a safe, accessible, affordable, reliable way to shop, socialize, travel to or from work, keep appointments, or do errands. Terrence's presentation will be followed by a question and answer period.



During the second part of the meeting, a representative from Senator Leahy's office will provide an overview of the recently passed federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and what these funds will mean to Vermont. This infrastructure spending, which received bipartisan support in Congress, will rebuild America's roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind. A summary of the initiative is available at:

[Fact Sheet: The Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal | The White House](#)

Funding made available to Vermont through this program may also be available to leverage local dollars, particularly the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to local governments. There will be time at the end of the presentation for questions and an open discussion. Contact Jim Sullivan at the BCRC (jsullivan@bcrct.org) for more information.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87808214778>

Call in: 1 929 205 6099 — Meeting ID: 878 0821 4778

Dorset Awarded Grant to Study Bike-Ped Connection



The Town of Dorset was awarded a 2021 VTrans Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant for a scoping study to evaluate alternatives for a new shared-use path to connect Dorset's village center to the recently completed Manchester Rail Trail. Combined, the two paths would create a continuous 6.5 mile shared-use path linking Dorset's village center to downtown Manchester along the VT-30 Corridor. The BCRC will serve as the study's Municipal Project Manager.

Although the centers of Dorset and Manchester are only 6.5 miles apart, the only direct connecting road, route VT-30, is uninviting and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. The highway is busy, (AADT 5,611 in the project area) has frequent heavy truck traffic, mostly 40 and 50 mph speed limit zones, and narrow, 1-3-foot-wide shoulders and no sidewalks outside of Dorset's village center.

Dorset and Manchester both have walkable, mixed-use centers, and are economically tied. Many Dorset residents work, shop, and attend school in Manchester. There are also trip generators between the two towns along VT-30, including the HN Williams Store, the Dorset Farmer's Market, and The Dorset School (grades K-8), as well as numerous businesses, residences, and intersecting residential streets. Both towns are tourist destinations.

A shared-use path would provide a safe and inviting cycling and walking and route between the two communities and to trip generators between and could entice residents and visitors to choose to walk or bicycle for some trips, instead of driving, a desire that has been expressed at public meetings. At leisurely cycling speeds (13-20 mph) the entire 6.5-mile trip would take between 20 and 30 minutes, within range of the average American commuting time of 27 minutes. E-bikes, which are soaring in popularity, would make the commute even faster and feasible for more people.

For more information, contact Mark Anders at the BCRC (manders@bcrvt.org).

ARPA Portal for Municipal Governments

The US Treasury Department on December 14 notified designated local ARPA contacts regarding availability of a new portal to be used to confirm accounts, designate reporting roles, and submit the required agreements and supporting documentation to Treasury for reporting and compliance. To access Treasury's Portal for the first time and be designated for any reporting roles, new users must first register with Login.gov. New users should use the following link: <https://portal.treasury.gov/compliance>. Users who have previously registered through ID.me may continue to access Treasury's Portal through that method. The following link should be used if you have already registered through ID.me <https://portal.treasury.gov/cares/s/slt>.

An excellent resource is available at VLCT's [ARPA webpage](https://www.vlct.org/resources/american-rescue-plan-information) (<https://www.vlct.org/resources/american-rescue-plan-information>) and click the "Treasury's Reporting Portal Is Now Open to NEUs" under "Latest News." You can direct questions to VLCT at ARPA@vlct.org or contact Allison Strohl at the BCRC (astrohl@bcrvt.org).





State Releases Climate Action Plan and Draft Comprehensive Energy Plan

The Vermont Public Service Department recently released the Draft 2022 Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP), which was followed by the Initial Climate Action Plan (CAP) developed by the Vermont Climate Council. While the two plans are distinct, they

overlap in several areas and are required to be consistent with another and meet the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA).

[The 2022 Draft CEP](#) builds upon the 2016 CEP, re-establishing goals from the previous plan, and setting new goals for the electric, transportation, and thermal sectors. The plan also examines these sectors through the lens of two key themes: equity and grid evolution. The 2022 Draft CEP re-establishes the following goals: meet 25% of energy needs from renewable sources by 2025, 45% by 2035, and 90% by 2050. The plan also establishes new sector-specific goals:

- In the electric sector, meet 100% of energy needs from carbon-free resources by 2032, with at least 75% from renewable energy sources.
- In the transportation sector, meet 10% of energy needs from renewable sources by 2025 and 45% by 2040.
- In the thermal sector, meet 30% of energy needs from renewable sources by 2025 and 70% by 2042.

[The CAP](#) outlines pathways and strategies for Vermont to reduce climate pollution, adapt to climate change, and meet the greenhouse gas reduction requirements established by the GWSA. Like the 2022 CEP, the CAP has a significant equity component, and the plan is informed by six *Guiding Principles for a Just Transition*, that were developed by the Just Transitions Subcommittee of the Vermont Climate Council. The CAP is organized around five themes:

- i. Cutting climate pollution
- ii. Resilient working and natural lands
- iii. Vital communities
- iv. Capturing carbon
- v. Cross-cutting solutions

Both plans are important to Vermont's energy and climate future and will impact the work of state agencies, regional planning commissions, and municipalities. For more information, contact Callie Fishburn, BCRC's regional energy coordinator: cfishburn@bcrcvt.org.



VAPDA Annual Report and Story Map

The Bennington County Regional Commission is one of eleven regional planning commissions (RPCs) in Vermont (like one other regional organization in the state, the BCRC also serves at the regional economic development organization for our area). The individual RPCs have many shared responsibilities and collaborate on numerous statewide initiatives, and are represented jointly as the Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA). You can get a sense of the work being done by RPCs around Vermont by reviewing VAPDA's latest annual report ([VAPDA - BCRC \(bcrcvt.org\)](#)) and by viewing this online storymap: [2021 Vermont Regional Planning Commissions \(arccgis.com\)](#).

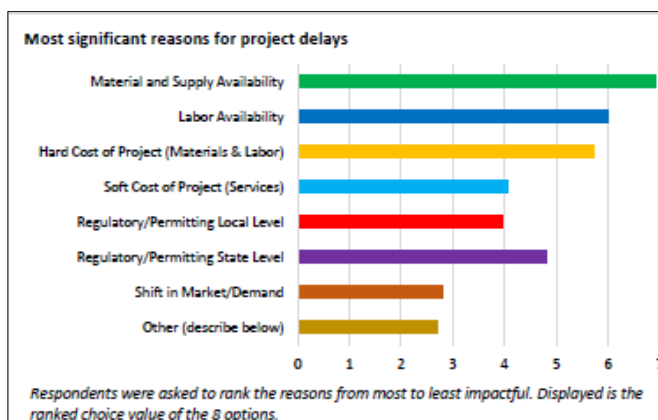
VHFA Releases Report on The State of Residential Development in Vermont

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, the process of developing homes in Vermont has become more lengthy, more costly, and more complicated than ever before. Although the difficulty of residential development has steadily increased for many years in the Green Mountain State, the pandemic confronted developers and contractors with an unprecedented barrage of challenges. Those challenges extended beyond the normal range of barriers typically seen by policy makers and funders.

Some of the impacts can be seen in rising costs of projects and the large number of homes being planned. In August 2021, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) conducted a survey and held a forum to hear directly from development professionals and contractors. These efforts sought to explore how the pandemic is affecting development capacity to move projects forward and to understand how resource capacity is being strained by escalating costs.

The survey found that nearly 90% of respondents were experiencing project delays and higher development costs beyond typical year-over-year increases. Respondents indicated that both delays and costs were mostly tied to a combination of availability and cost for labor and materials. Participants also described increased processing time and costs due to overlapping and sometimes excessive regulatory and permitting burdens. When development capacity is constrained and projects cost more due to materials and labor, projects will inevitably come online more slowly and cost more to complete.

The full report can be read at: [State-Residential-Development-2021.pdf \(vhfa.org\)](https://vhfa.org/State-Residential-Development-2021.pdf).



Information about Food and Fuel Assistance

Hunger Free Vermont is working to get the word out about food and fuel assistance available to Vermonters this year. Click on the graphic below to get a bulletin that provides valuable information for residents of your community.



STRETCH YOUR BUDGET
with Vermont Food Programs.

No one should be worried about having enough food. Hunger Free Vermont wants you to know that there are many food resources available to help you and your neighbors.

BCRC Project Updates

Stay current with recent BCRC planning and community development projects by visiting the new "Recent Projects" section of our website:

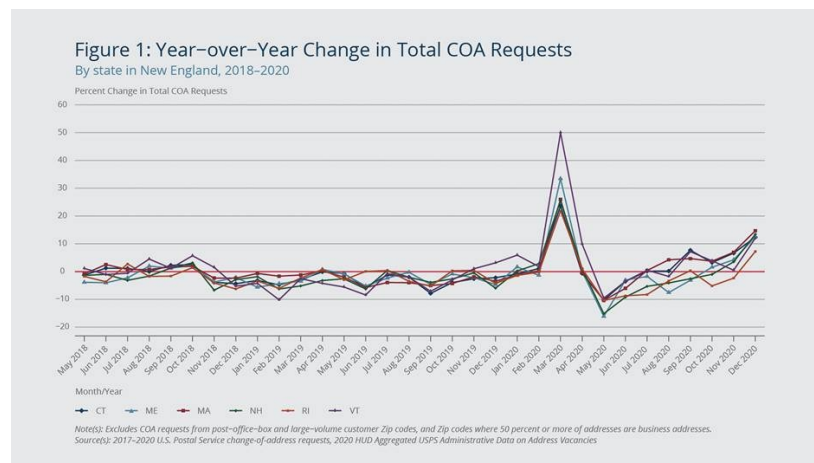
[Recent Projects - BCRC \(brcvt.org\)](https://brcvt.org/Recent-Projects)



Pandemic Related Migration Trends in New England

The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston has produced an interesting report on migration trends in New England during the recent pandemic. The report finds that the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies implemented to limit the spread of the virus brought about changes to domestic migration patterns in New England. Overall, the region lost about 50,000 fewer households to permanent out-migration in 2020 compared with 2019, as measured by United States Postal Service change-of-address requests. Every New England state except Massachusetts either lost fewer households or gained households for the first time since at least 2017. However, counties that added households generally saw an increase of less than 1 percent. The characteristics of a community mattered as to whether it gained or lost households. Communities with more than 1,000 people per square mile lost an average of 3 percent of households in 2020, while those with fewer than 1,000 people gained an average of 2 percent. The size of the college-student population in an area did not have a large effect on net migration, despite the move to online schooling for much of 2020. However, the share of seasonal housing in a community did. The number of households in areas with 25 percent to 50 percent seasonal housing stock grew by almost 2 percent through permanent net migration. Temporary net migration also led to positive net migration overall in much of New England in 2020, indicating that many of the new residents may not remain in their communities for the long term. You can read the full report at:

[How the COVID-19 Pandemic Changed Household Migration in New England - Federal Reserve Bank of Boston \(bostonfed.org\)](https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/2021/01/how-the-covid-19-pandemic-changed-household-migration-in-new-england/)



Arlington and Bennington Receive Municipal Planning Grants

The Department of Housing and Community Development recently announced Municipal Planning Grant awards for the coming year. Two grants, totaling nearly \$25,000, were awarded for projects in our region. Arlington will rewrite the zoning bylaw to improve usability, alter outdated language, and incorporate best practices to promote dense mixed uses in village centers, incentivize smart growth housing development throughout town, and meet NDA standards. Bennington will work with community partners to plan for public use of a building that is about to be acquired by the town. The building is located in the center of downtown, adjacent to municipal uses and the Putnam Block redevelopment project.

These grants are in addition to the “Bylaw Modernization” grants that several towns and villages are pursuing. For more information, contact Cat Bryars at the BCRC: cbryars@bcrct.org.

News from the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance



The BCRC provides administrative and program management support services for the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance (BCSWA). For the past several years, Michael Batchner has been the BCRC staff person responsible for working with the Alliance and has done an exemplary job in collaborating with communities, solid waste companies, state agencies, and our outreach coordinator. Michael announced his retirement this month and BCRC staff will be covering those responsibilities as well as we can until we can find a replacement— we appreciate your patience during this transition. Thank you and best wishes to Michael!

School Outreach Programs: We had the pleasure of presenting Trash on The Lawn Day events at Sunderland and Bennington elementary schools this fall giving students hands-on experiences in understanding how to properly sort their school's trash and recycling while discovering ways to reduce the amount of waste they generate through reuse and alternative packaging. Waste, recyclables, and food scraps were weighed and tabulated then we challenged both groups to conduct the same exercise in the spring to see where they have improved.



Trash on the Lawn Event at Sunderland Elementary

We offer class-size or school-wide presentations and curriculum development support. Some examples include brief tutorials on food scrap diversion, Trash On the Lawn Day (TOLD) programs and customized presentations to support existing curriculum. Contact Paula Kamperman, Outreach Coordinator at (518) 788-2553 or email: paulakamperman@gmail.com

Business Outreach Programs: The Alliance has an active program for business outreach. Paula Kamperman, the Alliance Outreach Program Manager contacts at least 40 businesses each year and provides information on recycling, food scrap diversion, hazardous waste management and other information to reduce the amount of material being sent to landfills and to save those businesses money. If interested, contact her at (518) 788-2553 or email: paulakamperman@gmail.com

New Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance Website: Our new website, bcswa.org, is THE comprehensive resource for all matters related to solid waste management. The new expanded site contains resources targeted especially for [schools](#) as well as downloadable [resource library](#), videos, and more! Check it out! You can also stay informed by following us on: **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/SolidWasteAlliance/> **Instagram:** https://www.instagram.com/bcswa_vt/ **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC444AjDh-NQ0ox089uCEHlw>

Mark Your Calendars: 2022 Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events are Scheduled

- May 7, 2022: Mount Anthony Union Middle School, 747 East Rd., Bennington, VT from 9 AM to 1 PM for all 13 towns in the Alliance
- July 23, 2022: Readsboro, VT Agency of Transportation Maintenance Facility, 1136 VT Route 100, Readsboro, VT from 9 AM to 1 PM for Searsburg, Stamford and Readsboro
- September 17, 2022: Dorset School, 130 School Drive, Dorset, VT from 9 AM to 1 PM for all 13 towns in the Alliance

The Alliance is also working on a permanent facility for the collection of household hazardous waste that should be operational in August of 2023. Details for all events including materials accepted, and more importantly, not accepted, can be found [here](#) along with downloadable fliers of the event. An important change to 2022 events- **Fluorescent bulbs are no longer accepted!** Fluorescent bulbs are accepted at many area transfer stations and some retail locations. Check our [website](#) for drop-off locations that accept up to 10 unbroken bulbs a day. Please contact us directly if you have hazardous material you want to bring to an event so we may determine if acceptable and any associated fees. Contact us at (802) 442-7031 Ext. 2.

Hazardous Waste Disposal Guidance for Schools: The State of Vermont has resources available for schools in managing hazardous waste. Hazardous waste handlers, including schools that generate and handle hazardous waste, are required to notify DEC of their hazardous waste activities and receive an EPA number for their site. To fulfill this requirement, schools that generate hazardous waste must complete and submit a [Vermont Hazardous Waste Handler Site ID form](#). The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has a helpful [flyer](#) to guide schools in reducing use of hazardous materials and minimizing their impact when necessary. In addition, their [website](#) has resources for possible waste disposal grants, instructional videos and school lesson plans.

Using “Artivism” To Bring About Change: Rebecca Schwartz, A Burlington based artist is leading projects to bring awareness to K-12 classrooms about the impacts of plastic on our environment while empowering students to express themselves by creating messages through art to present to Vermont legislators about creating positive systematic changes for greater health for all. Visit her website at: <https://www.rebeccaschwarz.com/calltoaction> for more information.

Events and Opportunities....

New ACCD Brownfields Assessment Funding Opportunity: The Vermont Legislature recently allocated \$25 million in funding to the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) for the characterization and cleanup of brownfield sites. Of it's \$11 million allocation, ACCD is providing \$1 million of this grant funding to Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions for environmental site assessments statewide as part of its Brownfields Revitalization Program. This funding is available to current owners of properties that may have petroleum or hazardous substance contamination. For additional information or to request environmental assessment funding for an eligible brownfield site please contact Jim Henderson, jhenderson@bcrvt.org.

VNRC's Small Grants for Smart Growth program is back with a special round of funding to support the ability of communities to implement the smart growth recommendations included in the recently released Vermont Climate Action Plan. Small Grants for Smart Growth is offering one larger grant of \$5,000 in a competitive grant round for affordable housing, sustainable transportation, or climate resilience/adaptation solutions that meet smart growth criteria. Applications are due January 17th, 2022. Applications for awards of up to \$1,500 will still be accepted on a rolling basis. Learn more at <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/>

This is a great opportunity for planning commissions and other local groups looking to explore a new idea, engage the community, or plan for larger projects!

Contact: Kati Gallagher, Sustainable Communities Program Director | Vermont Natural Resources Council - 9 Bailey Avenue, Montpelier, VT 05602 - (802) 223-2328 ext. 114

BCRC January Meeting - Public Transportation and Federal Infrastructure Funding:
Thursday, January 20 * See page 1 for details.

Annual Spring Flooding Seminars: Now that winter has begun, it's time to start thinking about spring flooding. Vermont Emergency Management and its partners will host Vermont's annual Spring Flood Seminars starting in late January. These events are an opportunity for emergency managers and community leaders to hear the latest forecast for spring flooding and ice jams, learn more about emergency response assistance available from state agencies, emergency planning, disaster recovery, hazard mitigation opportunities, and other topics. All are welcome to attend the Spring Flood Seminars, especially community leaders who may be involved in disaster response or recovery. These virtual Spring Flood Seminars will be held live through Microsoft Teams on:

January 31st, 2022 1:00-3:30pm

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only) 1-802-828-7667

Phone Conference ID: 565 316 454#

February 1st, 2022 9:00-11:30am

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only) 1-802-828-7667

Phone Conference ID: 303 799 724#

February 3rd, 2022 6:00-8:30pm

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only) 1-802-7667

Phone Conference ID: 559 574 19#

There is no need to RSVP in advance for these events. (See next page for more details...)

The seminars usually begin with a discussion of the current snowpack and possible ice jam areas, followed by the overall flood outlook for the spring. Though not as common as in other areas of Vermont, ice jam flooding does occur in Bennington County. In 2014, there was an ice jam in North Pownal on a tributary of the Hoosic River. The ice jam caused flooding in a neighborhood off of Route 346 near the North Pownal Post Office. In January 2018, a warm air mass with periodic heavy rain of one to two inches resulted in flooding, including flooding across Route 313 in Arlington due to an ice jam. Other spring flooding events, highlighted in Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, that have occurred due to rainfall and snowmelt:

- March-April 2004: As much as three inches of rain fell across southern Vermont. This rain combined with the last of the snowmelt produced an excessive runoff of water. As a result, flooding took place in Bennington at the Paper Mill Village along the Walloomsac River and Manchester Schools were closed due to flooding. The gage on the Batten Kill River in Arlington, rose to 6.9 feet, nearly a foot above the six-foot flood stage.
- April 2007: An intense coastal storm spread heavy precipitation across southern Vermont, starting as a mixture of snow, sleet and rain which changed to all rain. Liquid equivalent precipitation totals ranged from three to six inches leading to minor flooding across portions of southern Vermont.

Spring flooding is a possibility each year, and with the changing climate, it could become more frequent in the years to come. To learn more about how to best prepare for spring flooding and ice jams, and what to expect this coming spring, join one of the Spring Flooding Seminars offered. For more information or to receive the full seminar announcement, email Allison Strohl at the BCRC: astrohl@bcrcvt.org.

The Department of Housing and Community Development is pleased to announce the availability of approximately \$2,900,000 in **Downtown Transportation Fund Grants (DTF)** to support revitalization efforts in Designated Downtowns and eligible Designated Village Centers. A few significant changes to the program this year will allow more projects to be funded with a substantial increase in funding availability, expanded eligibility to qualified Designated Village Centers, reduced municipal match to 20%, and an increase in maximum award amount to \$200,000. There is an additional \$170,000 available for DTF projects that incorporate eligible storm water components. See the 2022 [Downtown Transportation Fund](#) and [Clean Water Initiative Funding](#) for DTF Projects for eligibility, program guidance and application. Please contact [Gary Holloway](#), the Downtown Program Manager at 802-522-2444 if you have questions or need assistance with the DTF application. **Application Deadline: March 7, 2022**

BCRC Staff Contacts

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