# Burlington Walk Bike Council (BWBC)
# January 3rd, 2023 Meeting Notes

The monthly meeting took place 5:30- 7:00 pm via Zoom and at the DPW Office.

**In-Person Attendees:** Erik Brotz, Peter Keating, Jak Tiano, Julia Ursaki (DPW), Jason Stuffle, Bob Leidy, Dave Cawley, Charlene Wallace, Laura Wheelock (DPW)

**Online Attendees:** Gordon Dragoon, Faith Ingulsrud, Steve Spear (HNTB), Josh Olund (HNTB), Carolyn Cota (VTrans), Bob Klinefelter (VTrans), Michael LaCroix (VTrans), Peter Duval, Jason Seigelman, Jonathan Weber (Local Motion), Maddy Suender (DPW), Evan Gould

## 1. Introductions, Announcements, Updates and Public Comments

Started with introductions from everyone.

Bob brought up the importance of regional walk-bike connections in reference to the reduced areas that will be included in the Main Street reconstruction (See BWBC meeting notes from 12/6/23). He mentioned that Jak/VPOP had previously suggested that College Street become a one-way for traffic and Bob had recently biked in that area and feels it would be viable. He thinks it could connect well to the Main Street and I-89 Bike-Ped Bridge projects. He thinks that on-street parking could be moved to side streets so it could still be 2-way motorized traffic with bike lanes. That would also improve visibility coming out of the YMCA driveway.

Jak pointed out that increased housing density is important to improving transportations options and announced that the planning commission will be conducting a formal public hearing on the proposed Neighborhood Code on January 9th. The proposed code would increase opportunities for more housing units in existing neighborhoods.

Jason discussed moving some of the parking on Flynn Ave to the side streets or elsewhere to provide for bike lanes. It seems after a brief survey recently there was more than enough parking in the area.

Erik asked DPW's staff about hiring. It seems DPW hasn't received any qualified candidates and are expanding their outreach efforts to find suitable candidates.

## 2. Winooski Bridge Replacement Design Project

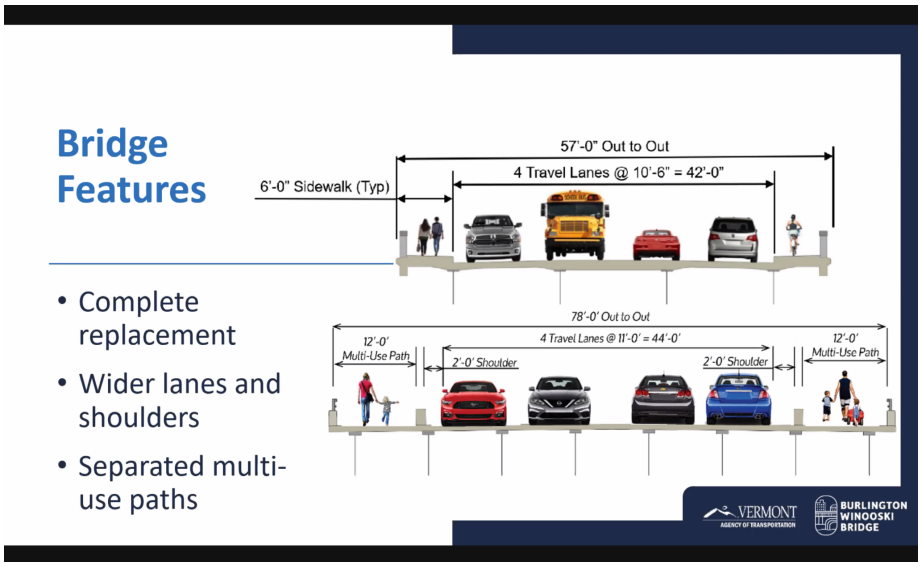
### Consultant Presentation - Josh Olund (HNTB)

Josh explained how the Winooski Bridge project has essentially been in the planning and design process for 6-7 years. They have been Identifying the need, collecting data, receiving external

input, and defining the project. The gap between defining the project through a scoping study and receiving the federal grant was about 3 years. The project was awarded $24.8 million.

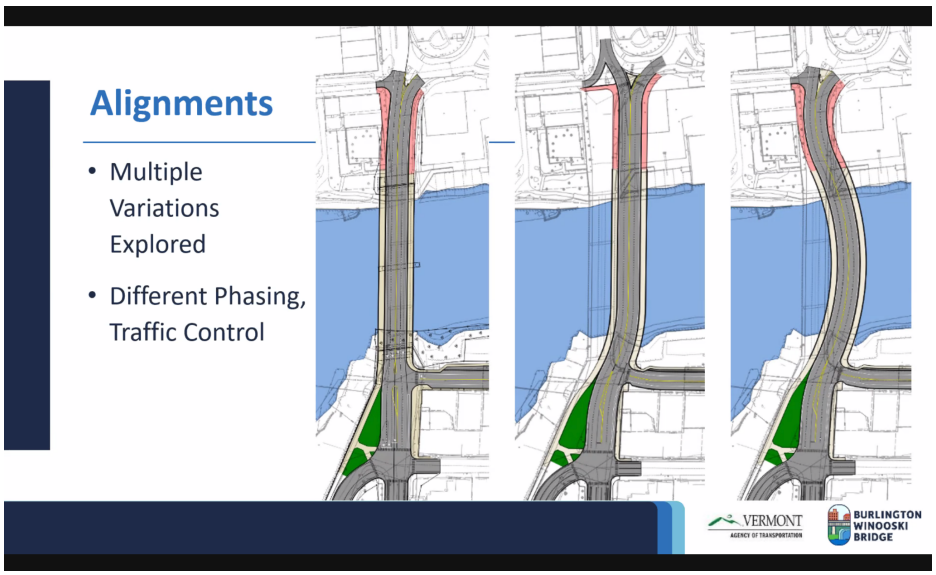
Currently the team is defining the base technical concept and establishing the footprint for the bridge design and reconstruction.

Selected Alternative(s)




Presentation from Steve Spear (HNTB) on Current Alternatives under consideration

Trying to focus on moving vehicles, bikers, and pedestrians through the Colchester-Barrett-Riverside (CoBaRi) intersection and bridge.



For the bridge itself, they are considering the following:

- a barrier-protected shared use path that will accept bikes and pedestrians alongside car traffic on the bridge.
- including “refuge” on the bridge for viewing falls and the dam. This would be located in the center
- markings and signage for bikes and pedestrians

The team seeks BWBC input on:

- Bike directionality when crossing bridge
- Signing and striping
- Most common routes when approaching the bridge
- E-bike use
- Greenspace preferences

## Public Comments

Erik invited general comments and then would move to the more specific issues defined by the consultants.

Bob - Likes the roundabout on Shelburne Rd (made by VTrans), designed and built for 20K vehicles but now only handles 15K. Based on that reduced use, why are we building for high-traffic 2 lanes instead of 1 lane? Do we anticipate increased demand?
Steve - A roundabout was considered in the scoping phase, but the site constraints (space to river and cliffside and historic nature) would have right-of-way impacts that kept it from being selected.
Bob - After confirming that only a 2-lane circle was evaluated, asked why couldn’t there be a 1-lane circle in that location?
Steve - It was determined that going down to single-lane isn’t feasible from a traffic design standpoint. He understands their concern but they are building for existing and anticipated future traffic demand.
Jason - Curious as to why 2-lanes are prioritized when much of the traffic coming into the intersection is 1-lane. It increases the conflict points and 2 lanes don’t necessarily make things safer or easier. We should evaluate traffic throughput in that location again.
Laura - These choices were made in 2017 and we are ultimately held to those choices. The Shelburne Rd roundabout is currently not congested because the city is devoid of office workers now, which is a completely different problem. With the combination of Colchester and Riverside on one side and Route 2 and Route 15 coming together on the other, it’s essentially like a 4 lane highway that is necessary to move the traffic through the location.

Jason - How much can we change the current project without having to reapply for the project?
Bob Klinefelter (VTrans) - There is a hard funding date for the bridge project. Need to get the June contract out by June 2026 or the funding goes away. Speaking to the bridge project’s 4 lanes, it is being built for a 100 years of use, but wants to clarify that the space need not be allocated for cars ad-infinitum - can reallocate space later. The intersection was originally

scoped in 2017, and the Burlington City Council reaffirmed the intersection and 2-bridge design in a more recent vote.
Michael LaCroix (VTrans) - We can't change scope at this point because of the way the project is funded. The intersection is built with future traffic in mind. The Shelburne St. roundabout was built with room for expansion to 2 lanes if needed in the future. If we were to build a single-lane roundabout at CoBaRi we would still need to allow for expansion to 2 lanes, with the same impact on surrounding properties, and the land would need to be acquired for that purpose.

Peter - The project is not sensible in the way that funding is determining design.The project doesn't fit current needs. It seem anachronistic to cling to old traffic projections for motor vehicles. The existing bridge is structurally sufficient and doesn't need to be updated until we have a better plan. Could use congestion pricing to reduce traffic volume. Removing signals is a proven way to reduce traffic volume. Through traffic should be directed to I-89 instead of this area. Reasonable to have 1 lane each way plus bikes and pedestrians on existing bridge. Curious as to what steps are necessary to cancel the project.
Laura - In response to the questions "is the bridge structurally sufficient," the bridge isn't at immediate risk of falling apart, but it is in need of structural improvements. There is no difference in structural needs for 2 lanes versus 2 lanes. The reconstruction is intended to handle expanded ped/bike/motor traffic. In response to whether the rest of the network can handle the traffic on the bridge, the team is going to look into this as part of the plan to close the bridge for construction.

Jonathan - Frustrated with our political leaders needing to look to traffic engineers telling them what is going to work. The existing perception is based on old-school thinking on how traffic demand works. Induced demand should be considered and reducing the throughput of the bridge shouldn't affect traffic in a major way. "People in Winooski are tired of being treated like a traffic-processing facility." Encourage the engineers to stop focusing on auto-centric design. If the facility is level F that just means slower traffic. Question: Current regional transportation plan calls for a reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) (reduced traffic demand) going forward and is this project considering that?
Project team members replied that they do not know but can look into it.

Evan - The vast majority of comments at prior public meetings were regarding walk/bike so why hasn't the design been updated to incorporate all that feedback?
Josh - The public outreach has involved many other venues and the team has heard from many other stakeholders including those who have asked for larger lanes. These include drivers of GMT buses.
Evan - We know wider lanes increase traffic fatality rates and speed. Why should those be considered?
Josh - The walk-bike lanes are being increased dramatically. The expansion of vehicle lanes is mostly to handle the additional buffer needed on the edges due to the safety barrier.
Evan - The fundamental bridge design doesn't fix any issues. Can this project be canceled?
Carolyn Cota (VTrans) - The city would have to cancel the project.

Jak - Wanted to echo some previous points. Widening of the lanes doesn't seem to be as necessary as is claimed. VTrans standards require 11-12' lanes on arterials where the speed limit is 50-65 mph, but on the Winooski bridge it will only be 25 mph so should design for that. Wider lanes means higher speeds. This whole project is treating anything other than car traffic as an afterthought. The current sidewalk on the bridge is really bad now so we need the separated pedestrian/biking infrastructure. It will be most safe when bikes and ped are separate and motor vehicle speeds are low. Question: What dictates the vehicle lane width here, and why is it always getting bigger?
Laura - the 11 foot lane is a state standard. They are considering asking for a waiver but large vehicles like buses and ambulances are 10.5 feet wide at mirrors so can't be next to each other. Still would need a buffer on the edge even if lane widths were reduced.
Jak - If the current bridge is structurally sufficient why can't we experiment with reducing the amount of lanes and expanding the multi-used paths?
Laura - The bridge isn't falling down but it is near the end of its life. It may not survive another 20 years without significant maintenance.
Carolyn - Reiterating Laura's point, the condition of the structure is going to get worse. Even though the bridge is structurally sound now it is still beyond its service life and it will be six more years until the new bridge is completed and it will be older still. Plus the existing deck cannot be replaced for quicker fixes because of the way it was constructed 100 years ago.

Charleen - Concerned about speeds because of wider lane widths. Would the "curved" alternative slow down lane speeds in a noticeable way?
Josh - All the alignment alternatives are being considered. Traffic calming *could* be a benefit but the curved alignments aren't being considered strictly for traffic calming.
Jason - The middle alignment option could handle extra bike/ped construction. Is there a limit to bridge width?
Bob K - The curved alignments might be able to include bike-ped facilities under the bridge, though it will likely be more expensive.
Laura - There is a cost to every trade-off. Something like that could be a good future project, but funding isn't unlimited and ultimately most of it comes from the feds. The curved alignments work well on the Burlington side but would require taking more land on the Winooski side.

## Specific Feedback on the Consultants' Questions

Bike directionality when crossing the bridge, most common routes when approaching the bridge, and greenspace preferences:

> Bob: Would like to cross both directions on one side. Cloverleaf-like structures for bicycles would be helpful and possible on the Winooski side.
> Erik: Crosses using the lights. Lower stress crossing on the Winooski side than the Burlington side
> Jason: Depends on the situation. If it isn't rush-hour, I will bike on the road, otherwise I will ride slowly on the sidewalk.
> Evan: Barrett and Mill should at least be continuous/elevated crosswalks. It would be a good way of differentiating pedestrians.

Jak: Almost always uses Riverside. The way that the bridge connects to the Riverside path, it's just always easier and safer cycling. Cycling traffic on Riverside should be prioritized because of that.

Jak: Maybe the west side should be prioritized, with 14' on that side and 10' on the other.

Bob: The Winooski meeting had a lot of the ped advocates. A topic that was brought up was heavily prioritizing one side.

Signing and striping:

Erik: In Europe there were many places with 2-way bike traffic and peds next to each other, separated by painted lines. The paint was often ignored but it mostly worked.

Jason: Signaling and signing is generally ignored. It's almost entirely infrastructure that determines behavior.

E-bike use:

Peter: E-bikes are almost entirely unregulated in America/Canada. In Europe they have regulations that are more thought out. Not just limited by motor output, but the design of the bicycle itself

The consultants said that the slides from the meeting will be posted on the project website and the next public meeting will be on January 31, 2024. A participant requested that a sign about the meeting be posted on the bridge so users could see it.