



Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative

CIRC HIGHWAY SAMPLE COMMENT SUMMARY / TALKING POINTS

SENSIBLE, LOW COST, EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS NEEDED FOR CHITTENDEN COUNTY

BACKGROUND: The Circ Highway is an expensive, outdated, and ill-conceived highway project. It will increase global warming pollution, destroy farmland and fragile wetlands, reduce transportation choices, harm the economy and increase traffic. It would be cleaner, cheaper and more effective to focus on fixing existing roads and providing alternatives to driving – like freight rail, buses, carpooling and bike lanes.

Following is some detail for comments:

THE CIRC WILL INCREASE GLOBAL WARMING POLLUTION:

- Cars are the biggest source of global warming pollution in Vermont.
- Bill McKibben has called the Circ a “global warming machine.”
- The more cars and trucks on the road, the more global warming pollution.
- Using rail to move freight was not adequately considered as an alternative that would get trucks off of residential roads. Moving freight by rail produces less global warming pollution than trucks.
- A new roadway through Williston reduces opportunities for travel by bicycle, bus or walking, all of which are better for global warming than travel by car. A new road means a new transit route is needed or transit service is reduced. Both would increase global warming.
- New development around or near the Circ, as we have seen at Taft’s Corners, would be accessed by cars and lead to more driving and more global warming.
- Development around the Circ would lead to commutes from farther away and increase global warming pollution as a result of longer commutes.
- Residential areas near the Circ would be less desirable. Many residents would move farther out and need to drive more and cause more global warming pollution.
- Farmland in and around the Circ and in outlying areas would be paved for new sprawl development as we have seen at Taft’s Corners and in Essex. Sprawl development that is only accessed by cars produces more global warming pollution.
- Along with increasing global warming pollution, the Circ will send traffic and trucks alongside residential areas and a school where there is no road now. This will increase air pollution and noise in these areas that are now quiet. The Circ Highway will both increase noise overall and move noise to areas that are now quiet.

THE CIRC WILL DESTROY FARMLAND, WILDLIFE HABITAT AND FRAGILE WETLANDS:

- The corridor for the Circ Highway is presently mostly farmland.
- The corridor now supports wildlife as well as farming.
- Undeveloped areas near and around the Circ Highway are also farmland and areas used by wildlife.
- There remain large undeveloped areas near and around the Circ Highway. With the highway, these areas are likely to be paved, resulting in the loss of farmland and fewer local areas to grow food and crops.
- Building the Circ Highway will result in the significant and unnecessary loss of good quality wetlands in and around the Circ corridor. Alternatives that improve existing roads instead of building the Circ would affect less than one acre of wetlands.
- Fragmentation of habitat and indirect wetland impacts from the Circ are significant and not adequately addressed.
- Wetlands serve an important function to protect water quality. Many streams and waterways near the Circ are polluted and do not meet water quality standards. Keeping wetlands in tact, instead of destroying them would help improve water quality in Chittenden County. Protecting the wetlands in the area of the Circ where development causes water pollution is important and can avoid the need to clean up polluted waterways in the future.
- Building the Circ Highway will result in the loss of significant wildlife wintering habitat. Alternatives that improve existing roads instead of building the Circ do not affect habitat.
- The Circ Highway will create a barrier that blocks wildlife movement and will reduce wildlife populations in areas near the Circ Highway.

THE CIRC IS BAD FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND WON'T ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC:

- The Circ Highway won't help the economy or traffic.
- The greatest relief from traffic congestion comes from improving existing roads.
- Improving 2A results in a "Grade B" for Five Corners' congestion. The new roadway results in a "Grade E." Five Corners should not continue to have a failing grade.
- The price tag for the Circ is too high. Spending over \$60 million to save four minutes of travel time is not a good investment. This is tax money that will not be available for fixing roads or supporting schools.
- There are no funds specifically dedicated to building the Circ Highway. Investing in lower cost solutions, means more money is available to fix crumbling roads and bridges in Chittenden County and throughout Vermont.
- Meaningful economic development will use transportation dollars to help people get to work, school and shopping. It won't waste limited tax dollars on a dirty, outdated highway.
- Fixing existing roads reduces traffic congestion while keeping jobs and economic development within our communities.

For more information, visit <http://www.vtsmartgrowth.org/>