

## **POSITION STATEMENT ON TRANSPORTATION**

Vermont's transportation system is essential to the region's and state's economic vitality and growth. Our quality of life is bolstered by an efficient multi-modal transportation system and we support expansion and development of appropriately located facilities that promote that concept. For the long term financial and economic health of Vermont, we can no longer afford to rely solely on single occupancy transportation as the primary mode of choice in our state.

Current revenues for transportation infrastructure rely upon decreasing revenue sources. The spending levels are \$203 million short annually of what is needed to simply maintain current conditions in our transportation system according to the Joint Fiscal Office. Deteriorating conditions and rapidly rising commodity and material costs will only exacerbate this gap and further erode our purchasing power despite recent fee increases.

### **Highest Priorities**

- Address the inadequate level of funding devoted to maintain, develop, and expand a complete multi-modal transportation system. Furthermore, the development of a systematic approach to provide adequate state matching funding and enable the use of available federal transportation funds should be undertaken immediately.
- Focus on maintaining the infrastructure that is currently in place to avoid failures that result in closed or barely passable bridges, roads and rail infrastructure.

### **Additional Priorities**

- Aggressively expand our rail capacity to reduce wear and tear on our roads and to limit the need for large trucks in our downtowns.
- Aggressively improve and expand public transportation services, park and ride lots, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and car pooling options that are complementary to inter-modal transit connections.
- Reestablish sustainable inter-urban and interstate passenger bus service.
- Construct major arterial or new capacity projects only if they can be shown to mitigate congestion and/or directly contribute to regional economic expansion.
- Continue efforts to provide for competitive air service at Burlington International Airport including improved access to the airport.
- Separate the definition of "new projects" in the state's capital plan so that downtown improvement projects no longer compete with major new projects for funding.

### **Funding Strategies**

- Within three years, state transportation fund revenues should only be used to support the Agency of Transportation budget and transportation projects that are included in the State Transportation Capital Program (including required match for Congressionally-approved federal aid projects) and federal transportation authorization acts.
- Any increases in user fees should be used to provide the needed state match for federal funds or increased use of bonding.

- Over a three year period, Vermont should phase in a user fee per dollar of the fuel price on the sale of gasoline which will augment and eventually reduce the existing fuel tax which is a fee per gallon of fuel sold.
- Explore/study options for heavy commercial traffic to pay more, especially for commercial traffic going through the state while at the same time being competitive with surrounding states. Options to be considered include increased registration fees based on vehicle weight.
- Funding for public transit funding must be removed from the property tax and replaced with a regional tax to reflect the regional benefit it provides. Public transit authorities and rail authorities may be a solution to promoting more regional/statewide collaboration and cooperation.

### **Project Planning and Development Strategies**

Vermont must restructure the way transportation services are provided to encourage innovation, foster cooperation, reduce project cost, and expedite project delivery. Examples include:

- Federal transportation dollars and state matching funds should be appropriated as prioritized in the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CCMPO's) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Any further prioritization effort by the state or region should place emphasis on a project's contribution to economic development.
- Energy independence, environmental sustainability, and greenhouse gas reductions are affected by our land use and transportation policy decisions. Changes to federal, state and local policies are needed to address these goals.
- Act 250, local zoning/subdivision provisions, impact fees and other state/local permit conditions should be revised to encourage smart growth land development patterns that facilitate and promote walking, biking and public transit as options for meeting every day mobility needs.
- Promote a whole system approach to transportation planning in order to reduce energy consumption. Opportunities like traffic signal timing optimization, access to public transit, park and ride lots, bike lanes, development near existing infrastructure and denser development in town centers can reduce fuel use substantially. Barriers such as permitting, lack of funding and planning and lack of priority setting often prevent projects like these from moving forward.
- Consider enabling tax incentives/credits for employers that use transportation demand strategies to encourage alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle.
- Improve regional governance and collaboration and coordination with all stakeholders in order to create efficiency and solve problems that cross borders and are regional in nature. We support enhancing the current system of regional governance to reduce redundancy and to improve efficiency with potential long term consideration of system expansion.

Approved by the Board of Directors of the LCRCC on November 12, 2008 and the GBIC Executive Committee on October 13, 2008.