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MEMO

TO: City Council

FROM: Carol Weston, PE

DATE: August 9, 2010

RE: Champlain Parkway Public Process Update

The recent public process on the Champlain Parkway consisted of a series of four meetings designed to present the details of the project to the public. In addition, it was used as an opportunity to inform the public about the Act 250 process and to discuss elements of the design that not dictated by the Federal Highway Administration's Record of Decision.

The meetings were held on May 25 and 26 and June 9and 10. Approximately 80 people attended the meetings. There were a number of issues that came up in each of the meetings that are highlighted below:

- Pedestrian and Bike Amenities on the Champlain Parkway – There is a lot of interest in ways in which the Champlain Parkway can strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the city. Specifically, the public indicated their desire for pedestrian activated signals along the corridor, safe routes to school and a bicycle/pedestrian facility along Pine Street.

- The project will include pedestrian activated push buttons along the signalized intersections. In addition, crosswalks will be provided along Pine Street at the following non-signalized intersections: Locust, Howard, and Kilburn.

- With respect to Safe Routes to School, the city remains committed to add sidewalks where there are currently none and this project will add a sidewalk along the west side of Pine Street as well as on one side of Sears Lane for the length of the street that is within the project limits. It should be noted that the

majority of pedestrian improvements to Sears Lane are proposed with the South End Transit Center. However, the Parkway will provide sidewalks leading up to and away from the crossing of the Parkway.

- Many of the citizens at the meetings were concerned that the level of traffic on Pine Street combined with its many uses and on street parking make it unfriendly to the non-commuter cyclist. The City agrees that it is beneficial to have a facility that is separated from the street that can carry bicyclists and pedestrians from the south end into the downtown district. As a result, we are now proposing a wide sidewalk (between 8' and 10') be constructed along the west side of Pine Street between Lakeside Avenue and Kilburn Street. At Kilburn Street, the sidewalk will revert to 5' wide with a tree belt.

- Speed Control – Questions were raised about what measures will be included to control speeding, particularly as the traffic transitions from 189 to the Parkway.

- The design will incorporate speed reduction measures east of the Route 7 bridge so that traffic heading west will begin to slow from 55mph to 30 mph further in advance than formerly planned. By the time the traffic passes the southern end of Pine Street, the speed limit will have been reduced to 35mph and will be at 30 mph by the time it reaches Home Avenue. The design team will work with Burlington Police Department to incorporate any additional design elements that they need to properly enforce speed on the Parkway.

- Shared Use Path between Queen City Park Road and Lakeside Avenue – Issues were raised about final routes and connectivity between sections of the path and the city's street and sidewalk network.

- The shared use path between Home Avenue and Flynn Avenue will be connected to the Lyman, Morse and Ferguson cul-de-sacs. Access east to west to Briggs Street from the Parkway is not included in the design because the limited access nature of the facility does not permit pedestrian or bicycle crossing between blocks. In addition, a path from Home Avenue to the end of Briggs Street is not possible at this time because we have no rights across the private property between the two. However, the distance between blocks is approximately 1600 feet between Home and Flynn and 1000 feet between Flynn and Sears Lane. Access is provided at each intersection (Home, Flynn, Sears, and Lakeside) to provide connectivity to city streets and sidewalks.

- The existing shared use path on the west side of the Parkway ends at Queen City Park Road. Although this project does not include improvements to Queen City Park Road for pedestrians and bikes, the City can decide to pursue these improvements with a different project and source of funds. This should be part of a larger planning process for Queen City Park Road that will be partially dependent on the City of South Burlington's plans for that area as well.

- There is also a shared use path that will connect the southern end of Pine Street with Shelburne Street (Route 7) just south of the Price Chopper parking lot. Provisions will be made in the design of this facility to make the Shelburne St terminus safe for bicycles to safely exit the path and enter the sidewalk on Route 7.

- The design has historically included an ornamental fence on both sides of the Parkway between Home Avenue and Lakeside Avenue. This is not a requirement and therefore can be removed. It is our opinion at this time that it should be removed so that the Parkway resembles more of a city street with adjacent green belts and sidewalks.

- Concerns were raised about the Englesby Brook crossing, particularly regarding aesthetics and wildlife crossing concerns. The crossing is designed with a natural channel bottom which will allow fish and macroinvertebrates to navigate the stream. Clearing will be minimized to maintain as much of the canopy as possible and new plantings will be established for future growth. Clearance letters from the Agency of Natural Resources stating that there are no endangered or threatened species within the project limits.

- CCTA currently uses the southern end of Pine Street through to Queen City Park Road. This route will be affected because Pine Street will become a dead end. The City met with CCTA and offered to provide design amenities that would allow CCTA to have a turn around at the end of Pine Street so that this route would continue. In addition, the City is willing to construct a new bus stop at the southeast corner of Pine and Home with a shelter so that more riders can take refuge. At this time, CCTA plans to discontinue service on Pine Street south of Home Avenue to avoid doubling back up the street. However, if CCTA does wish to change their plan in this area, the design team will work with them to incorporate elements into the Parkway that may be useful to them.

- Directional signage was raised by some residents as a concern. The city will incorporate a full wayfinding plan into the design. The Parkway will be treated as a gateway into the City from the south and visitors will be directed to local areas of interest as well as parking. The signage plan will also include speed control signage, school route signage and our standard recommended language about the use of truck air brakes.

- Some residents are concerned about cut through traffic between Shelburne Street and Pine Street, particularly along Locust Street. The traffic models show that this movement will not be favorable by the majority of motorists. However, the possibility will always exist, as it does now, for commuters to cut through streets such as Locust to avoid signals and such. If cut through and speeding become more of a problem after the construction of the Parkway, the City will work with residents to come up with a traffic control plan for Locust Street.

- The City, State and many residents feel it is beneficial to erect the signals on Pine Street at Maple Street and King Street as the first phase of the project. This is currently the plan for construction.

- There was much discussion about a left turn at Pine and Maple Streets. The addition of a signal with timing that favors north/south travel will reduce the number of left turns at Pine and Maple Streets. However, the concern exists that a car waiting to turn will inhibit traffic from continuing north through the intersection. While traffic will naturally begin to move around these left turning vehicles, the City has agreed to formalize this movement by creating a turning lane at Pine Street and Maple Street. The lane will be approximately 100 feet long which can accommodate 4 or 5 cars. There will be no dedicated turn arrow here so the Level of Service here is not significantly impacted.

- Some of the meeting attendees expressed a concern about light pollution that may be caused from the addition of street lighting to new sections of the Parkway. The design team will use standard guidelines for lighting streets, sidewalks and intersections. We will also consider the use of cut-off fixtures which help to keep light from shining back into nearby homes. The use of cut-off fixtures will be determined by whether or not the back light is needed to light the shared use path along the Parkway, particularly between Home Avenue and Lakeside Avenue.

- Many of the homeowners and residents along the project raised concerns that were specific to their property. As we have done in the past with other projects, we will schedule meetings with all the adjacent property owners to discuss issues and possible solutions to those issues with the designers. The one area where this may be difficult is the issue of noise abatement. Currently the project does not include any additional noise abatement. The noise analysis conducted for the project shows that noise levels do not exceed the Federal Highway Administration threshold at which noise abatement is required and would not be an eligible project cost

Overall, the public process was very helpful to bring the project back to the residents and business owners for a discussion about the issues that exist, especially for those living close to the Parkway. The design team heard the concerns and was able to respond to many of these issues with possible solutions. It is important to note that there are some who remain opposed to the project. For those opposed to the Parkway, the process may have been less satisfactory since the meetings were not intended to determine whether the project would move forward, but rather an opportunity to learn about and comment on design elements of the project.

However, there were proponents of the project at each meeting who reminded us all of the issues that the residents in the Home and Flynn Avenue neighborhoods have been living with for many years. These residents specifically identified the use of neighborhood streets as a truck route and for commuter cut through traffic. This has

been occurring for decades on streets not designed to handle the weight or volume of traffic. In addition, we were able to discuss the economic benefits of the Parkway in terms of providing access to Burlington's industrial area and to the growing business district on Pine Street. While the northern portion of Pine Street will see additional traffic, the installation of traffic signals will ease congestion and increase levels of service in this area.

The next step in the process is to submit the Act 250 application. The design team had hoped to submit the permit application in early August. However, given some of the proposed design changes and other permitting issues, we now anticipate the filing of the application in late fall to be more realistic.