



June 20, 2019

Re: 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards

Dear Municipal Officials:

Overview

Over the past few months, the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources have been developing an updated State-approved Town Road and Bridge Standards template (attached). One of the primary reasons for updating these standards is to give municipalities more flexibility in choosing the parts of these standards they would like to adopt and to make it easier for FEMA to understand the standards each municipality has adopted in the event of a federally declared disaster. We have worked very closely with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns on this effort and we have involved the Vermont Local Roads program and the regional planning commissions to solicit reviews and input from the municipalities.

In accordance with Act 110 of the 2010 Legislative session, the Town Road and Bridge Standards were last reviewed and approved (unchanged) in 2017, and the next deadline is 2021. However, there is a practical need to update the standards sooner to eliminate the overlap with the Municipal Roads General (stormwater) Permit standards, which all towns must follow. The MRGP standards only cover “hydrologically-connected” local roads (about 50% of local roads on average). By comparison, the Town Road and Bridge Standards are voluntary, also include stormwater management and flood resilience, construction and safety practices, and apply to all town highways.

The existing (January 2013) template can remain in effect through July 31, 2019. After that date, the January 2013 version of the Town Road and Bridge Standards will no longer be considered the State-approved template. Consequently, we would like to strongly encourage all municipalities to consider adopting the new 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards template prior to August 1, 2019.

2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards

The attached State-approved Town Road and Bridge Standards template has seven sections and is organized around hydrologically-connected and non-hydrologically connected roads. As noted in the table, Sections 1 and 2 are required for connected roads, and Section 3 is required for all bridges and culverts over perennial streams. For the non-connected roads, municipalities can choose which specific standards they wish to adopt.

To be eligible for increased funding under the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) rule (CVR 10-000-001) and to be eligible for an additional 10% State share funding on Town Highway Structures and Class 2 Town Highway grants, a municipality need only circle “Yes” under the hydrologically-connected road segments column (Sections 1 and 2) and then circle “Yes” for Section 3. All other

choices may be circled "No." Adoption of what essentially is mandatory under the MRGP and the Stream Alteration Permit standards may seem redundant, however, it makes it clear to FEMA that a municipality has formally adopted "codes and standards" in writing.

We would like to encourage all municipalities to circle "Yes" for as many sections in this new template as they feel comfortable with to improve the resiliency of municipal highway infrastructure, enhance the safety of the travelling public, and to realize as many benefits as possible from the FEMA Public Assistance program.

There are a few municipalities throughout the State who have much more comprehensive and elaborate standards and specifications related to their highway infrastructure. In the past, we have allowed municipalities to use those documents with a signed certification that they meet or exceed the State-approved template. The 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards template continues to allow for this. You will find that proviso in the second paragraph of page 1. The VTrans District staff can assist municipalities who fall under that category of "codes and standards."

The VTrans District personnel are available to work with any municipality in explaining the various options and to answer questions related to the new town road and bridge standards template. Please contact your nearest VTrans District Office for assistance and information. See attached District map and contact information.

Sincerely,



Julia S. Moore, P.E.
Secretary of Natural Resources



Joe Flynn
Secretary of Transportation