

20 February 2025

Ian Albinson
Interim Town Administrator
1 South Street
Bristol, VT 05443

Dear Ian and Selectboard:

As I mentioned in my 10 February 2025 email to you and Freeda Powers, in my work position as a Research Faculty member at UVM, I had begun to receive word of funding freezes on federally-sourced grants, and this got me thinking that Bristol may have some financial exposure in this regard - either work completed may be in danger of not being reimbursed, or grants that were awarded may not be funded going forward.

From the list of active Bristol grants that Freeda supplied, I volunteered to research those with federal sourcing and their possible connections to programs or agencies being impacted in recent weeks by presidential Executive Orders. While Vermont agency representatives contacted by Freeda indicate that they do not believe that Bristol's federally-sourced grants are at risk at this time, I found it helpful to know the context for these funding programs to better interpret latest news items that are documenting this administration's actions with respect to the agencies/departments that are administering and disbursing these funds. For example:

- **FEMA funds** support our Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC) grants (FY2021, 2022) that we are relying on for the **Mountain Street project** engineering and administration. The new FEMA administration has threatened to freeze FY21, 22, 23 funds, prompting US [Senators to request clarification](#) due on 21 Feb.
- **US EPA funds** pass through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation to support the VT Drinking Water State Revolving Fund that we hope to rely on for a loan to complete the **Bristol West water line replacement**. Under the Biden administration, DWSRF was in part supported by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds, that have been targeted for freezing by the new federal administration. As of 13 Feb some states were [reporting difficulty accessing](#) EPA funds already obligated.
- Federal Highway Administration (**FHWA**) funds pass through VT AOT to support the Municipal Assistance Bureau and two programs (TAP, Bike-Ped) on which we are relying for the **Airport Drive Sidewalk construction/ management** and the **West Street Sidewalk Scoping** study. According to documentation for the [TAP](#) and [Bike-Ped](#) programs, they are supported by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds (also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law), that have been targeted for freezing by the new federal administration.
- **US Dept of Treasury** supports the Capital Projects Fund grant program that we are relying on for **Lawrence Memorial Library** to carry out extensive renovations that will improve heating and cooling, air circulation, and Internet access. While these are ARPA funds and most ARPA funds have been already encumbered by VT state or towns, page 14 of [this guidance](#) seems to indicate that reimbursements for expenditures on the Capital Projects Funds are to be drawn down from

the US Treasury. In other words, these particular ARPA-related funds may not be already disbursed to states/ towns. Worth investigating further.

While states including Vermont have filed a [lawsuit](#) contesting the federal funding freeze, and federal courts have issued a Temporary Restraining Order ([TRO](#)), the federal administration has [continued to defy](#) this TRO and is finding other pathways to delay, cancel or claw back funds. Litigation will take time and availability of federal funds for each of these Bristol capital improvement projects seems uncertain in the current political climate.

Best,

Kristen Underwood
Bristol, VT