



TOWN OF BRISTOL

Holley Hall | P.O. Box 249 | Bristol, VT 05443
(802) 453-2410 | townadmin@bristolvt.org | bristolvt.org

TO: Bristol Selectboard
CC: AZ Larsen, Zoning Administrator; Bruce Nason, Chief of Police; Bristol Conservation Commission
FROM: Gregory W. Faust, Town Administrator
DATE: July 13, 2026
RE: Lord's Prayer Rock and Rockydale Road Corridor: Background for Public Comment

1. Purpose

A resident has been placed on the July 13 agenda under public comment to raise long-standing safety concerns at the Lord's Prayer Rock. A second resident has separately raised traffic safety in the adjoining Rockydale Road corridor. This memo provides the Board with the jurisdictional facts, the documented history of prior efforts at this location, and the options realistically available to the Town.

2. The Concerns Raised

Agenda Item: Louise Brynn

Louise Brynn came into the Town Administrator's office and asked to be placed on the July 13 agenda. Her concern is the long-standing safety problem at the Lord's Prayer Rock, which sits directly at the edge of the travel lane on East Street. She is not raising a new incident; she is raising a condition that has persisted for decades. The documented history in Section 4 speaks directly to this.

Related Context: Katherine Fanelli

Separately, Katherine Fanelli of 640 Rockydale Road wrote to the Town Administrator on June 5, 2026, with a follow-up on June 8, and has since also called. She is not the noticed agenda item, but she raises the same corridor and the Board should be aware the concern is not isolated.

- Her request is a reduction of the posted speed limit from 40 to 35 MPH on the corridor between the Prayer Rock and Tillermans, together with more consistent enforcement.
- She reports the most persistent speeding involves large trucks, Tuesday through Friday, with peaks between 10 and 11 AM and again in mid-afternoon.
- She has already contacted the Bristol Police Department, the Vermont State Police, and Addison County Sheriff Michael Elmore. Sheriff Elmore visited the site with deputies and confirmed the concern using laser radar. He referenced a state fund that could support more consistent Sheriff's Department coverage.

The two concerns are adjacent but not identical, and as Section 3 explains, they fall on opposite sides of a jurisdictional line. Ms. Brynn's concern is at the rock itself, which is within the Town's Class 1 segment. Ms. Fanelli's concern is the corridor east of the Rockydale Road junction, which is state highway.

3. Jurisdiction

Zoning Administrator AZ Larsen reviewed the Vermont Agency of Transportation right-of-way mapping on July 13. The map is included as Attachment A. It confirms the following:

- East Street is a Class 1 town highway through the Lord's Prayer Rock. The Class 1 designation continues east past the rock and ends at the Rockydale Road junction.
- East of that junction, the road is state highway (VT Routes 116 and 17) under the jurisdiction of the Vermont Agency of Transportation.
- The Lord's Prayer Rock and the Town park therefore sit within the Town's Class 1 right-of-way, several hundred feet west of the jurisdictional transition.
- 640 Rockydale Road and the corridor described in Ms. Fanelli's request lie east of the transition and are within state highway jurisdiction.

This finding is consistent with the draft Lord's Prayer Rock Park Management Plan prepared by the Bristol Conservation Commission, which states at page 8 that East Street is a Class 1 town highway to the southeastern extent of the village and then transitions to a state highway just east of the park.

Practical effect: conditions at and immediately around the rock are a Town responsibility. The posted speed limit on the corridor east of the Rockydale Road junction is set by the State, and any change there requires an engineering and traffic study through VTrans. Speed limit changes on Class 1 town highways also carry study and state concurrence requirements. The specific procedure has not been confirmed and should be verified with VLCT and VTrans before the Board considers any action on the Town's segment.

4. Documented History of Prior Efforts at This Location

The Bristol Conservation Commission's draft management plan documents, at pages 8 through 10, a long record of attempts to address safety at this location. The Board should be aware of this history before considering new proposals.

Year	Measure Considered	Outcome
1927	Lower corner of the rock painted white to increase visibility	Completed; still in place
1941	Split roadway around the monument, with land acquisition	Defeated at a warned village meeting (cost)
1957	Remove a section of the rock to permit road widening	Defeated by voters at village meeting
1958	State proposal to re-align the road south of the rock	Did not move forward
1974	State highway department proposed blasting part of the rock	Defeated at village meeting
1985	Village trustees considered moving the rock 20 feet south	Not pursued; risk of damage to the rock
2011	RSG bike and pedestrian scoping study, sidewalk alternatives	Not pursued; physical constraints and project expense

The corridor carries an estimated 6,000 vehicles per day (RSG, 2011), and the segment between the rock and Drake Smith Road has an accident history. The Lord's Prayer Rock is listed on the Vermont State Register of Historic Places. On four separate occasions, voters or trustees declined to move, cut, or blast the rock. There is currently no sidewalk or bike lane connecting the village to Rockydale.

5. Options Available to the Town

Enforcement

The Rockydale corridor lies outside the Bristol Police District. Coverage there is provided through the Town's contracted patrol arrangement, which currently provides a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 20 hours per month of motor vehicle enforcement. The Board may wish to ask the Chief of Police how those hours can be targeted to the corridor during the periods identified. Sheriff Elmore's offer of state-funded patrol time is a second, low-cost avenue.

Data Collection

Neither VTrans nor the Town can act on anecdotal reports. A speed counter or radar feedback deployment over two to four weeks would produce the 85th-percentile speed data that any speed limit review requires. This is inexpensive and is the necessary first step for every other option.

Formal Request to VTrans

With data in hand, the Town can submit a speed and safety review request to VTrans for the state highway segment. ACRPC can assist with scoping and support. The Town can make the request; it cannot guarantee the outcome.

Town-Side Improvements at the Park

Signage, sight lines, the gravel parking pull-in, and the long-identified absence of a bicycle and pedestrian connection to Rockydale fall within the Town's Class 1 segment. The 2011 scoping study concluded that a sidewalk in this corridor faces significant physical and cost constraints, but the underlying gap remains unaddressed and could be revisited through regional scoping or grant funding.

6. Related Matter: Draft Park Management Plan

The Bristol Conservation Commission prepared a draft Lord's Prayer Rock Park Management Plan and submitted it for Selectboard review and approval in January 2026. Kristen Underwood confirmed on July 12 that the Commission is prepared to attend whenever the item is scheduled. The plan contains the historical record summarized in Section 4 above and sets out management objectives for the park. Recommend the Board set a date to warn this item for review and approval with the Conservation Commission present.

7. Recommended Next Steps

- Receive Ms. Brynn's comment and confirm the jurisdictional facts on the record, using Attachment A.
- Determine whether the Board wishes to have the process and requirements for a speed limit change on the Class 1 and state segments verified with VLCT and VTrans, and if so, direct staff accordingly.
- Ask the Chief of Police what contracted patrol hours can be targeted to the corridor, and pursue Sheriff Elmore's offer of state-funded patrol time.
- Authorize a speed data collection deployment of two to four weeks and bring the results back to the Board.
- Following data collection, submit a formal speed and safety review request to VTrans, with ACRPC support.
- Schedule the draft Lord's Prayer Rock Park Management Plan for Selectboard review with the Conservation Commission present.

Attachment A: VTrans Right-of-Way Map

Bristol - Town ROW



Source: Vermont Agency of Transportation right-of-way map viewer, retrieved by AZ Larsen, Zoning Administrator, July 13, 2026. The red line indicates Class 1 town highway. The green line indicates State Highway. The Class 1 segment carries East Street past the Lord's Prayer Rock and ends at the Rockydale Road junction. All roadway east of that point, including 640 Rockydale Road, is within state highway jurisdiction.