

ACRPC TAC FY2027 Transportation Planning Study Request

DRAFT for review by AZ Larsen, Freeda Powers, and Greg Faust — not yet submitted

(Supersedes the earlier circulation-study and speed/calming drafts in this folder.)

Applicant: Town of Bristol

Study title: Downtown Bristol Access Study (VT Routes 17/116 core; West Street to just before Airport Drive, East Street to just past Drake Smith Road, North Street to Pine Street, South Street over the bridge)

Prepared: August 6, 2026

Deadline to return to ACRPC: Tuesday, August 11, 2026

Contact at ACRPC: Mike Winslow, Assistant Director, mwinslow@acrpc.org, 802-578-9999

Description of Problem

Bristol needs a downtown access study: a comprehensive look at how vehicles, pedestrians, transit, and parking move through and access its village center. The study should carry equal weight across four connected priorities: reducing posted speeds, traffic calming, access management, and pedestrian safety. VT Routes 17 and 116 run concurrently through the village center as West Street, Main Street, and East Street, carrying a state-highway traffic load, including trucks, at a posted 30 mph through a compact, high-activity pedestrian center. The Town's goal is a 25 mph limit through the core, and, within the designated Downtown Development District, the option to post below 25 mph. Setting a lower limit on this corridor requires an engineering and traffic investigation under 23 V.S.A. § 1007, and Bristol does not have that study in hand.

On West Street, 2024 Annual Average Daily Traffic is approximately 4,500 vehicles per day (per the July 2026 West Street Sidewalk Improvement Scoping Study). The same corridor carries dense driveway and curb-cut access, on-street parking, transit stops, and heavy pedestrian activity around the town green, Holley Hall, the Post Office, Community Bank, Howden Hall, the library, and downtown businesses, all conditions that both justify lower speeds and are made more dangerous by higher ones.

The study area is defined by four gateways off the main downtown intersection: West Street from just before Airport Drive; East Street (Main Street continues east as East Street) to just past Drake Smith Road; North Street to Pine Street; and South Street over the New Haven River bridge. The state-route concurrency runs West Street to Main Street to East Street; North Street and South Street are local town highways.

The conditions driving this request:

- A 30 mph posted limit through an active pedestrian village center whose Town Plan names pedestrian and cyclist safety as its top transportation priority.
- Documented jaywalking and pedestrian-vehicle conflict points through the core.
- Eastbound traffic regularly queuing at the main intersection, disrupting parking use and pedestrian crossings.
- A five-year crash history (12 crashes, Aug 2020–July 2025) concentrated at side-street and driveway conflict points.
- Unmanaged vehicle access, most visibly at Champlain Farms, where open curb cuts and no defined pedestrian path work against a slower, calmer street.

No study has established the engineering basis to lower the limit, or looked at how traffic calming and access management across the four gateways could support slower, safer downtown speeds. This study does that.

Relationship to the West Street Sidewalk Scoping Study (No Duplication)

This is a downtown access study, not a sidewalk study. The July 2026 West Street Sidewalk Improvement Scoping Study scoped sidewalk design along the south side of West Street and is proceeding to construction funding; this study does not repeat that work. It uses that study's existing-conditions data (traffic counts, crash history, ROW) as a starting point and focuses on what that study did not address: the speed and engineering investigation, traffic calming, pedestrian safety, and downtown-wide access and circulation.

The distinction holds even on West Street itself. The sidewalk study examined only south-side sidewalk design, so speed, calming, access management, and north-side conditions on West Street remain open for this study. Beyond West Street, this study also covers ground the sidewalk study never entered: the western West Street segment (Village Creeme Stand to Airport Drive), East Street to just past Drake Smith Road, and the North and South Street legs.

Desired Outcomes of Planning Study

A downtown access study for the VT 17/116 core, addressing four connected priorities of equal weight, that delivers:

Speed reduction

- A speed and engineering/traffic investigation sufficient to support reducing the posted limit to 25 mph under 23 V.S.A. § 1007, and, within the designated Downtown Development District, below 25 mph under § 1007(g).

Traffic calming

- Conceptual traffic-calming measures compatible with a state highway (gateway treatments, curb extensions, chicanes, raised or enhanced crossings) at the four downtown gateways and the main intersection.

Access management

- An assessment of curb cuts and driveways along all four legs, with concepts for consolidating and better defining vehicle access (Champlain Farms being the clearest candidate), plus a circulation and intersection review of the main intersection and the four gateway corridors, and a downtown parking inventory and turnover analysis (including North, South, and East Streets).

Pedestrian safety

- A pedestrian safety assessment of downtown crossings and conflict points (Champlain Farms, the main intersection, transit stops, and the school/community destinations along North Street), with conceptual crossing and safety improvements, plus a bicycle and transit connectivity review across the core and along all four gateways.

Expected Benefits of Planning Study / Next Steps Anticipated

The study delivers on all four priorities at once. It gives the Town the engineering basis that 23 V.S.A. § 1007 requires to move the posted limit to 25 mph through the core (and below 25 mph within the designated Downtown Development District under § 1007(g)); a set of traffic-calming concepts that make those lower speeds real on the ground; an access-management plan that reduces conflict at the documented driveway and curb-cut points; and pedestrian-safety improvements at the crossings and conflict points that residents use daily. Together these make the village center safer for pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers, and reduce crash exposure.

The study also positions Bristol to compete for construction funding through the VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, Transportation Alternatives, the Downtown Transportation Fund, Better Places, and VTrans Safety Programs, several of which weight documented safety benefit. It advances the Town Plan's walkability and safety goals, and it complements the Town's separate West Street sidewalk work without duplicating it.

Amount Requested

\$25,000 – \$30,000

(Program note: ACRPC expects \$50,000–\$60,000 available for FY2027 and typically funds 2–3 projects. This request sits at the upper end of the typical range given the four-gateway study area. If the TAC prefers, the scope can be phased, leading with the speed and engineering investigation plus traffic calming, and deferring the full parking and circulation analysis to a later phase.)

Signature Block (to complete before submission)

Town of Bristol is interested in applying for funding under the ACRPC TAC grant program.

- **Signature of Municipal Official:** _____
- **Position / Title:** _____
- **Date:** _____
- **Contact Information (phone / email):** _____

The applicant hereby represents that the Selectboard of the Town of Bristol supports this proposal.

Open Items Before the August 11 Deadline

- **Sign-off.** Circulate to AZ, Freeda, and Greg for a fast review, then confirm the signatory (Ian as Selectboard Chair, Greg as Town Administrator, or AZ).
- **Selectboard support.** The form represents that the Selectboard supports the proposal. Confirm the board is comfortable with this before submission, or note support is forthcoming.
- **Presenter.** The TAC may request a short presentation at their August meeting. Identify who would present (likely AZ or Ian).
- **Downtown district boundary.** For any below-25 mph posting, § 1007(g) reaches only the designated Downtown Development District; the West Street study notes only the eastern end sits in that district. The study scope should call for confirming the boundary. A 25 mph limit itself is available corridor-wide as a town-highway matter under § 1007(a).