

2023 VTrans Scoping Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Application

1. Project Title:

2. Applicant (Town, RPC, etc.):

3. Project Contact Info:

a. Name:

b. Mailing Address:

c. Town:

d. Zip Code:

e. Email Address:

f. Phone Number:

4. Fiscal Information:

a. Accounting System Automated Manual Combination

b. Unique Entity Identifier #

c. Fiscal Year End Month

5. RPC(s)

6. Primary Facility Type: Sidewalk Bike Lane Shared-use Path

Shoulder

Other (Please describe)

7. Project Description: Please give a brief description of the project (100 words or less.)

Detailed information should be submitted as part of addressing the selection criteria. Be sure to include identifying streets or landmarks that the proposed project links at either end (e.g. New concrete sidewalk with granite curbing on Main St. from Elm St. to Maple St.).

2023 VTrans Scoping Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Application

8. **Estimated Project Costs:**

Scoping Projects

Consultant Costs

Consultant Costs (to develop scoping report)

Admin Costs

Administration/Local Project Manager Costs

(Costs associated with oversight of the project, estimated at 10% of Scoping report development)

TOTAL SCOPING AMOUNT APPLIED FOR (including 20% local share)

2023 Federal Aid Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant Program

Application for Scoping Study Funds

Supporting Materials

Main Street/Route 7A Bicycle Scoping Study

Town of Manchester

June 2023

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2023 VTrans Bicycle/Pedestrian Program – Scoping Criteria Template

Applicant Name: Town of Manchester

Project Title--Scoping: Main Street/Route 7A Bicycle Scoping Study

Application Checklist

Make sure everything is included and pages numbered.

(1) Project Application Form (separate PDF file)

All other materials noted below to be provided in the same order as below.

(2) Project Evaluation Criteria Documentation for the project (completed BELOW)

(3) Project Map(s)

(4) RPC review confirmation letter

(5) Current letter of support from the municipal governing body acknowledging their willingness to provide the local match

(6) Documentation of contact with VTrans District office, if project is on the state system

(7) Supporting Documentation (Excerpts from other planning documents, police reports, etc.)

A. SCOPING PROJECTS

1. **Community Need—15 Points:** How does the project to be scoped contribute to the community bicycling or walking network? How does the project contribute to ongoing local placemaking or economic development initiatives? Include a description of the type of facility (i.e. sidewalk, bike lanes, shared-use path) to be studied and key origins and destinations to be served. Provide justification for study requests that exceed \$60,000.

Project Need

The project aims to address the need for safe and inviting cycling infrastructure along the Main Street/Route VT7A corridor in the Town of Manchester and Manchester Village. Despite the short distance between the Town of Manchester's village center and Manchester Village (approximately 1.3 miles), and the presence of numerous destinations along the corridor, cycling for short trips is not a popular choice due to several negative factors, including narrow or non-existent shoulders, high traffic volume ranging from 8,600 to 11,500 vehicles per day (AADT), and sharp granite curbs.

The corridor has significant trip generators, including hotels, grocery stores, the Orvis flagship store, and four schools, including Burr & Burton Academy. As a crucial transportation route, it is imperative to provide safe infrastructure for cycling and walking. Currently, the absence of such infrastructure compels many individuals to opt for cars instead of bicycles. Additionally, cyclists often resort to riding on the sidewalk, indicating a perceived danger associated with riding on the road.

Trip Generators

Many people live, work, shop, or attend school in or near the study area. The Town of Manchester's village center serves as the commercial and residential hub for Bennington County's northern towns and is a major tourist destination. It is dense, walkable, and mixed-use, with numerous commercial establishments and residential buildings. Manchester Village, 1.3 miles to the south, is also a walkable, mixed-use village center with schools, stores, restaurants, hotels, and residential buildings. There are several large hotels, including the Equinox, the Klimpton Taconic Hotel, and the Hampton Inn & Suites, that serve the region's tourism industry and employ many residents. There are also numerous retail outlets in the corridor, including the Orvis flagship store, and stores that fulfill basic needs like Shaw's supermarket and Walgreens drug store.

Within or near the study area, there are four schools that would greatly benefit from the implementation of a safe and inviting bicycle facility along Main Street. These schools are the Manchester Elementary Middle School, the Burr & Burton Academy (which serves as the high school for Manchester and surrounding towns), Manchester Village School, and the Maple Street School. Enhancing mobility for youth is a key driving factor behind the project's implementation.

Type of facility

The primary objective of the scoping study is to identify and evaluate potential solutions that will improve the safety and comfort of cyclists along the Main Street/Route VT7A corridor. A crucial component of this study involves assessing site constraints to determine the feasibility of different types of facilities.

Physically separated facilities, such as separated bike lanes, cycle tracks, or bi-directional on-road shared use paths, are widely regarded as the safest and most comfortable options for cyclists, particularly on high-stress roads with significant traffic volume. However, it is important to acknowledge that certain sections of the corridor may present site constraints that make it impractical or unfeasible to implement physically separated facilities.

In instances where a physically separated facility is not viable, alternatives such as on-road facilities, including wider shoulders or bike lanes, will be considered. These options aim to provide increased space and improved safety for cyclists while accommodating the specific site constraints of the corridor.

Bicycling Network

The study area intersects with bike lanes on Depot Street/Routes 11&30, and a shared use path accessible via School Street. This shared use path extends from the Manchester Elementary Middle School to the Recreation Center, where it connects with the Manchester Rail Trail. The Town of Dorset is currently conducting a scoping study to establish a connection between its village center and the Manchester Rail Trail.

Numerous low-traffic and slow streets, which provide a comfortable cycling experience, branch off from Main Street in both the east and west directions. Prospect Street and Barnumville Road were specifically selected as the project's boundaries due to their popularity among cyclists and their status as low-traffic, low-speed roads. Main Street/Route VT7A transitions into more of a rural highway beyond these points.

Existing plans – fits community goals

The project would contribute to local placemaking and economic development initiatives. Town, Village & Regional planning documents all support making cycling safer and more comfortable to improve mobility, environmental sustainability, quality of life, and tourism.

The study area is in both the Town of Manchester and Manchester Village and has the full support of both municipalities' elected bodies and planning commissions. Because there can only be one grant applicant, Manchester is the applicant, but will work in partnership with the Village to develop the study.

Improving cycling along the Main Street/Route VT7A corridor has broad public support. A transportation survey of Manchester Village residents, conducted in 2022 as part of the *Manchester Village Transportation & Land Use Study*, found:

- 77% of respondents said that Main Street/Route 7A should be made safer for cyclists.
- Only 3% of respondents said they feel “very safe and comfortable riding a bicycle on Route VT 7A.”
- Only 15% of survey respondents agreed that Manchester Village is a “very safe and comfortable place to ride a bicycle.”

The report identifies the need for a safer bicycle facility on Main Street/Route VT7A and recommends installing a physically separated facility:

Cycling

Only 15% of survey respondents think that Manchester Village is a safe place to ride a bicycle. 77% said that Route 7A should be made safer for cyclists. We recommend coordinating with the Town of Manchester to build a fully separated bicycle facility to connect downtown Manchester to the Village to create a safe, inviting, low-stress route.

Cycling Problems & Solutions

Problem: Cycling is stressful and uninviting on Main Street/Route 7A between Manchester Village and Manchester Center. Narrow or nonexistent shoulders, high traffic volume (AADT 8,600–11,500) and sharp granite curbs are negative factors that discourage cycling for short trips. Solution: Install a bicycle facility that is separated from traffic between Manchester Village and Manchester Center to create a safe, inviting, low-stress route. The potential payoff is high: this is a frequent trip, there are many destinations along the way (such as Orvis and Shaw’s) and distances are short (1.3 miles from Bonnet Street to Union Street via Main Street). A cyclist traveling at the moderate speed of 15 mph would make the 1.3-mile trip in about 5 minutes (page 9).

The *Manchester Town Plan, 2017* also recognizes the need for “complete streets” that encourage biking and walking. Under the heading “Transportation Mission: Develop a multimodal transportation system that functions well for all users” the plan states:

Rather than design streets or sites for the convenience of vehicular travel as was done through much of the 20th Century, we now design for the convenience of people using all modes of traveling through town. This includes centrally located, safe and convenient parking areas, a safe and convenient sidewalk network, safe and well-marked crosswalks, bicycle lanes, amenities such as benches, mini-parks and greenways, and other design elements that encourage people to park their cars and walk or bike throughout the town.

The Manchester community has long expressed a strong desire for a greenway network of pedestrian, cross country ski, and bicycle paths that would link the outskirts of town with the downtown. (Page 25).

The Bennington County Regional Commission’s (BCRC) *Transportation Project Guide*, a short list of transportation projects lists the “Manchester – Manchester Village Active Transportation Corridor” as one of its high priority projects (pages 8-9).

The potential use of a safe and inviting cycling route along Main Street/Route VT7A is high. Many trips are taken between Manchester and Manchester Village. A cyclist traveling at the moderate

speed of 12 mph makes the 1.3-mile trip in 6.5 minutes. By creating a safe and inviting cycling route, the project can encourage more people to choose cycling as a mode of transportation, reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and promoting health and wellness. Walkways and cycleways physically separated from motor vehicle traffic will also increase pedestrian safety.

Project benefits include:

- Promotes travel by bicycle for short trips, a healthy, low-carbon, low-cost, and quiet transportation mode.
- Attracts tourists and visitors who are interested in cycling and outdoor activities. This could result in increased tourism and a boost to the local economy. A safe and appealing cycling route can also provide visitors with a new and unique way to explore Manchester and its attractions and enhance their overall experience.
- Provides an accessible mode of transportation that does not require car ownership or a driver's license.
- Enhances mobility for children.
- Reduces traffic congestion by promoting cycling to several schools, particularly for students of Burr & Burton Academy. Currently, few local students cycle to school. Each time a student bikes instead of being dropped off and picked up, four car trips through the village and the town are eliminated.
- Connects to key destinations such as the Orvis flagship store, Shaw's Supermarket, restaurants, and hotels.
- Creates a safe cycling route to Barnumville Rd. and Prospect Street, two low speed, low traffic roads popular with cyclists.
- Eases parking pressure during peak tourist season by replacing car trips with bikes. 12 parked bikes fit in one car parking space.

11-15 Points – Project is an important part of a pedestrian or bicycling network and serves obvious bike/ped generators and/or the project includes measures identified in the [FHWA STEP](#) initiative.

6-10 Points – Project is in an area of low land use density or not clearly contributing to a local network.

0-5 Points – Unclear how proposed facility contributes to a network or solves a safety problem

3. Project Map

Study Area

School

Existing Bike Lanes

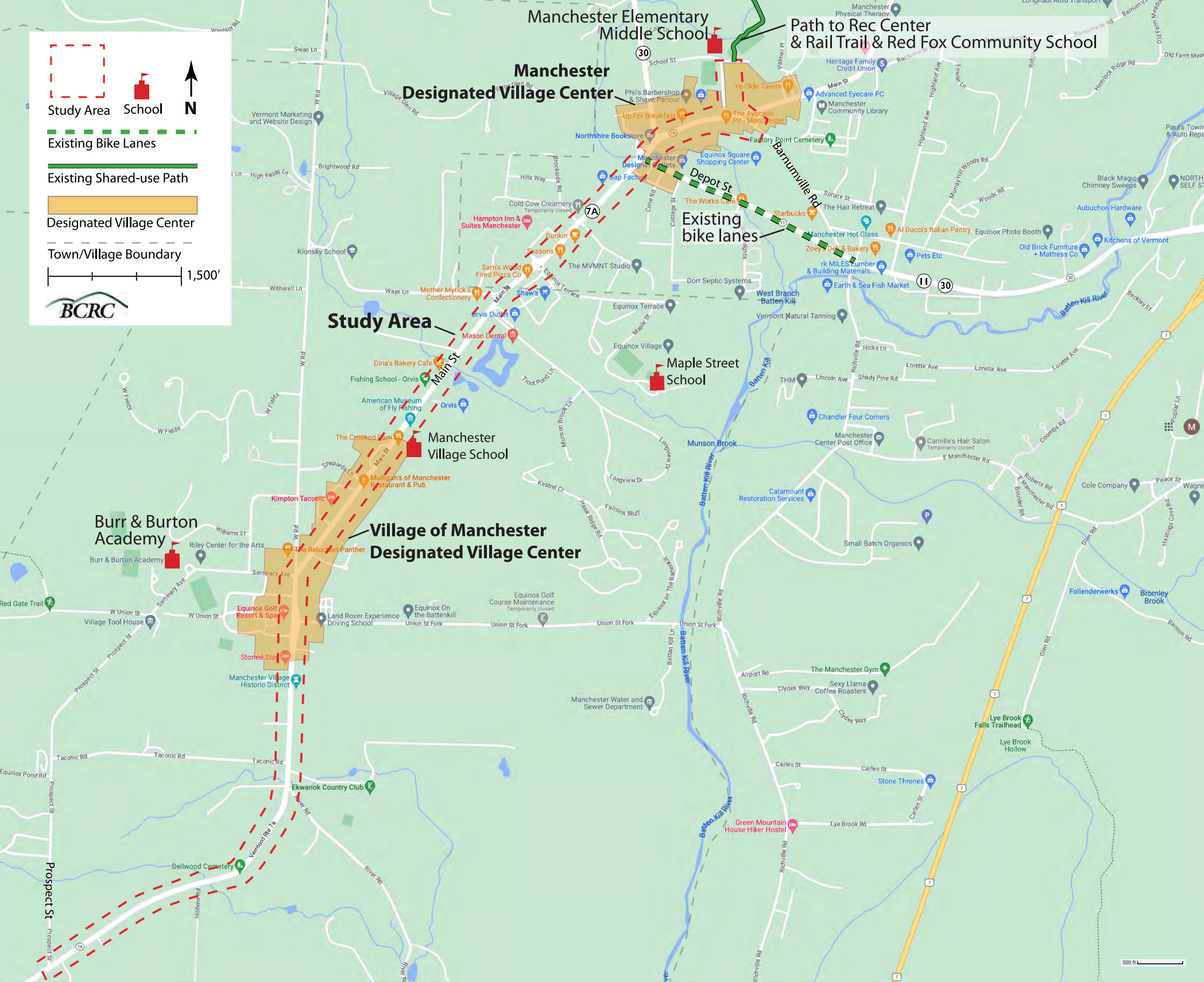
Existing Shared-use Path

Designated Village Center

Town/Village Boundary

1,500'

BCRC



4. RPC Review Confirmation Letter



Bennington County Regional Commission

210 SOUTH STREET • SUITE 6 • BENNINGTON, VERMONT 05201 • (802) 442-0713 OR 442-0682

June 5, 2023

Peter Pochop, Project Manager
Project Delivery Bureau – Municipal Assistance
Vermont Agency of Transportation
Barre City Place
219 North Main St
Barre, VT 05641

Re: In support of the Town of Manchester's application to the VTrans Bicycle/Pedestrian Grant Program

Peter,

The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) enthusiastically supports the Town of Manchester's application for a VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant for a scoping study to identify alternatives to create a safe and inviting bicycle corridor between the Village of Manchester and Manchester Center. The BCRC included improved bicycle facilities in the Main Street/Route 7A corridor in our *Transportation Project Guide* of high priority projects.

Residents of Manchester Village have clearly expressed their desire for a safer and more inviting bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Village and Manchester Center in public meetings and through a survey conducted as part of a recent Municipal Planning Grant Study.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with VTrans on this important project.

Respectfully,

Mark Anders, Planner

5. Municipal Letters of Support

TOWN OF MANCHESTER

40 Jeff Williams Way • Manchester Center, Vermont 05255
Phone (802) 362-1313 • Fax (802) 362-1314
www.manchester-vt.gov

May 25, 2023

Peter Pochop, Project Manager
Project Delivery Bureau – Municipal Assistance
Vermont Agency of Transportation
Barre City Place
219 North Main Street
Barre, VT 05641

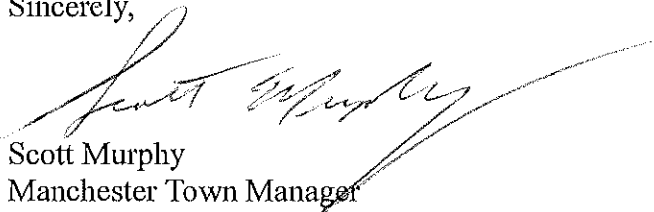
Dear Mr. Pochop,

The Town of Manchester's Selectboard voted to support the submission of the application related to the Town of Manchester and Village of Manchester's Route 7A Shared Use Study Grant Application and authorized the Town's share of the 20% local match requirement.

Our Selectboard and Planning Commission have sought to scope and invest in additional infrastructure improvement that will make the Town of Manchester and Village of Manchester more pedestrian and cycling friendly. Importantly, the scoping study that improve road safety and make the Town and Village more navigable by all residents and visitors.

The scoping study will ultimately address our joint goal of offering alternative forms of transportation for our residents and visitors. We feel the study will position us to improve the pedestrian/bike mobility of the greater Manchester area, increase opportunities for recreation and help reduce traffic.

Sincerely,



Scott Murphy
Manchester Town Manager



VILLAGE OF MANCHESTER

June 1, 2003

Peter Pochop | Project Manager

VTrans Project Delivery Bureau - Municipal Assistance

219 North Main Street, Barre VT 05641

Dear Jon,

I am writing on behalf of the Planning Commission for the Village of Manchester to support Manchester's application for funding to conduct a scoping study for shared use pathways that will offer alternatives for bikers and pedestrians in Manchester. The prospect of connecting the Historic Village of Manchester to the Town of Manchester's business district and beyond is particularly exciting.

Manchester Village recently conducted a Municipal Planning Grant that identified biking and pedestrian safety along the route 7A corridor as its most pressing issue. We expect that the study will provide us with alternative ways of looking at these issues and help with long term planning. In recent years, Manchester has diligently worked to plan and construct better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to enliven its downtown, to make the town a bicycle destination, and in support of healthy lifestyle alternatives for its community members and visitors.

The Village of Manchester will work to support these efforts.

Sincerely,

Richard Heilemann

Chair, Planning Commission

45 Union Street
PO Box 482
Manchester, VT 05254

Ph: (802) 362-1515
office@villageofmanchester.com
Hours: Mon - Thu 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

6. Documentation of contact with
VTrans District 1 office



Manders of BCRC

Bike/Ped grant application for Manchester

To: Christopher Taft

Sent - Exchange 3:39 PM

Hi Chris,

This email serves as notice that the Town of Manchester is applying for a VTrans Bicycle/Pedestrian Grant for a scoping study to assess potential measures to enhance bicycling safety and comfort along Main Street/Route VT7A from Barnumville Road in the Town of Manchester to Prospect Street in Manchester Village.

Thanks,
Mark

Mark Anders, Planner
Cell (347) 623-9807
manders@bcrcvt.org

Bennington County Regional Commission
210 South St., Suite 6
Bennington, VT 05201

7. Supporting Documentation Study Area Photos

Main St/VT7A Photos



Main St./Route VT7A has almost no shoulder.



The sharp granite curbs and narrow shoulders are dangerous for cyclists.



Heavy traffic volume just south of the Town of Manchester's village center.

Below: Manchester Village's designated village center.



Cyclists often resort to riding on the sidewalk, indicating a perceived danger associated with riding on the road.



Cyclist on sidewalk in Town of Manchester's village center.



Cyclist on sidewalk in the Village of Manchester.



Cyclist on sidewalk approaching the Town of Manchester's village center.