



TOWN OF BRATTLEBORO

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March 8, 2022

Members of the House Transportation Committee
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-530

Re: Amendment to the State Bridge Formula Program, House Transportation Committee:

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Town of Brattleboro, I am writing to support Representative Burke's amendment to the State's Bridge Formula Program. We believe that this amendment will relieve some of the local municipal financial burdens from the standard local match proposed for the replacement of bridge #54 on Route 9 in Brattleboro. We understand there needs to be statewide uniformity to how multi-jurisdictional bridge projects are funded, but this project is anything but standard. We are asked to decide which alternative to endorse, and we will. Still, the Selectboard believes that the cost-share should not fall disproportionately to those of limited means, primarily when the benefit from making the "right" choice will only provide minimal benefit to local taxpayers.

First, let me clarify that the Town is happy to pay the standard share of the cost of designing and implementing the relocation of the Town's water and sewer infrastructure as part of this project.

However, we don't believe the Town should be expected to bear the standard 10% burden for the cost of the bridge because the benefit of the bridge and especially the benefit of choosing the option with a temporary bridge is one of such immense regional significance. We cannot ask Brattleboro's tax base, one which is disproportionately low income, to bear the standard cost-share when so much of the benefit of using a temporary bridge is realized by those merely passing through our community.

About This Project

- Route 9 is part of the National Highway System and is a major east/west route across southern Vermont. According to VTrans, the Average Daily Traffic on Bridge #54 is

17,500 vehicles (more than some sections of I91), of which 8.5% or 1,488 are heavy trucks transporting goods.

- If Brattleboro was to make its decision about detour versus a temporary bridge, the deciding factor might well be based on cost. A project scope that utilizes a detour instead of a temporary bridge reduces the cost share from 10% (\$515,990) to 5% (\$232,248). While a detour would have little impact on local drivers, the effect to interstate trucking would be severe, a 64.8-mile detour, according to VTrans.

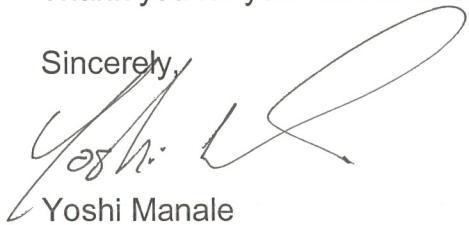
About Brattleboro

- 20.9% of people in Brattleboro live in poverty compared to 11.6% in Windham County and 10.2% in the State of Vermont (US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2019)
- The median household income for Brattleboro is \$38,176 compared to \$61,973 for Vermont (US Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2019)
- The estimated local cost share of making the "right choice" is \$515,990. This figure is significantly higher than the Town of Brattleboro's annual budget for road paving. This one project would force a tax increase of 4-and-a-half cents on the Town's property tax rate.

We understand that this section of Route 9 is Class 1, but it functions as a State highway and not as a local road. Changing the State Bridge Formula would help Brattleboro, and Towns like us with low median household income, reducing the imposition of a tax burden that would have little local public benefit. Please support this amendment so that we may find a better way to move forward with this project and make the right choices about how to proceed, but without placing an undue burden on those of limited means and who will only receive little benefit.

Thank you for your consideration of the Town's support for this amendment.

Sincerely,



Yoshi Manale
Town Manager

cc: Brattleboro Selectboard
The Honorable Becca Balint, State Senate President Pro Tem (from Windham County)
The Honorable Jeanette White, State Senator from Windham County
The Honorable Mollie Burke, State Representative from Brattleboro
The Honorable Emilie Kornheiser, State Representative from Brattleboro
The Honorable Tristan Toleno, State Representative from Brattleboro