

A Message from Secretary Neale Lunderville



Dear taxpayers and travelers,

Vermont Governor Jim Douglas in 2007 introduced a new initiative designed to increase the resources Vermont allocates to preservation and maintenance of the state's critical transportation infrastructure. Dubbed the "Road to Affordability," the initiative focuses great attention on the maintenance of our bridges, roads and culverts.

Vermont has aging transportation assets that demand greater and more costly attention than in the past. Shifting resources towards preservation of these assets is imperative not only to protect both the safety and mobility of the traveling public, but to be proper financial stewards of the state's investments. We need to

preserve our existing transportation assets so that they do not deteriorate to the point that they require major reconstruction and become a financial drain on the entire system.

Financially, this approach will pay dividends quickly as early intervention through preventative maintenance will result in significant savings. Every dollar we spend today on maintenance can save as much as \$10 tomorrow.

To free up resources to do this critical preservation and maintenance work, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) in 2007 set realistic timetables for its large projects so that available funding could be properly balanced. This provided an inconvenience for some communities as the timetables for promised projects were extended, but a strong focus on asset preservation and safety greatly benefits the state as a whole.

To maximize transportation dollars, VTrans also adopted a "just-in-time" approach to project delivery when it comes to design, permitting and the acquisition of right-of-way. Funds will not be spent on these items until we identify the money to actually build the project. This will prevent financial waste in having to duplicate efforts that become outdated with time, and make better use of VTrans staff as personnel will focus only on projects that will actually come to fruition.

Since Vermont has limited funds and numerous needs, VTrans as part of the Road to Affordability also adopted a "back-to-basics" approach to project design. Transportation projects must limit the costly addition of project amenities not related to preservation, safety and environmental protection. Examples of amenities include decorative street lighting, fancy sidewalks or curbing, and the undergrounding of utilities. If communities want these amenities, they must be prepared to pay for them.

The Road to Affordability approach to managing our transportation assets is a long-term strategy. Early successes during 2007, which are outlined in this report, were made possible due to strong support from the Governor, the Legislature and our many partners throughout the state, as well as the hard work and dedication of the entire VTrans staff.