

PETER SHUMLIN
Governor



State of Vermont
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Gov. Peter Shumlin outlines proposal for Circumferential Highway

WILLISTON -- Noting that the state has, once again, received conflicting decisions from Federal Agencies regarding the long-delayed Circumferential Highway and citing concerns that the ongoing legal dispute has wasted critical transportation focus and funding, Gov. Peter Shumlin today said the Circ as envisioned 30 years ago will almost certainly not be built and called for key stakeholders to look for better ways to meet the region's current and future transportation needs.

"The Circ, as originally conceived 30 years ago, will not be built," the Governor said at a recent news conference. "Let's face that reality while also recognizing that significant transportation problems exist in this region that need to be addressed. By bringing together stakeholders in the spirit of collaboration, I believe we will find more cost effective and modern solutions to our current challenges.

"I have asked the Agency of Transportation and the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization to take a fresh look at the Circ to see if there is a better way to solve the transportation problems in the four towns that are on the path of the project," he added.

Standing with the Governor were representatives for several environmental organizations, the Chittenden County business community and IBM, which has waited for more than 30 years for transportation improvements that were initially designed to meet the plant's needs at that time.

In a statement from Tom Torti, President of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, the chamber expressed its support for the concept of the Circumferential Highway to "reduce congestion, mitigate air quality issues and, importantly, allow planned and appropriate economic development activities to occur."

However, acknowledging the long delays and escalating costs associated with the project, Torti added, "We respectfully request that your Agency of Transportation in conjunction with stakeholders explore other more limited and scalable alternatives. It is our hope that these smaller alternatives will allow critical traffic needs at existing commercial and industrial sites to be addressed. More narrowly focused projects generally along the Circ route will get us there."

A highway in Chittenden County along the Circ route has been discussed since the 1960s and formal planning on-going in some form since 1982, but only a four-mile stretch of the 16-mile project has been completed to date. In recent years, the project has been stalled.

In addition, previous work was funded mostly from federal earmarked funds.

Future work, however, will require \$60 million to \$80 million dollars in regular state and federal program funds. At a time when all signs point to less state and federal funding in the future, it is a price tag that the state cannot afford at this time.

“My administration is focused on solving problems, not kicking them down the road and hoping they will go away,” Gov. Shumlin said. “The Circ, as originally conceived, has become a white elephant that is getting in the way of our ability to actually get something done. Our focus on a project that is not going to happen as it was originally conceived has led to inaction on transportation projects throughout the region.