

Background

Transportation needs are most effectively addressed at the corridor level rather than on a piecemeal basis.

The Vermont Corridor Management Handbook

This Corridor Management Handbook (CMH) was developed to provide a technical resource for state and regional agency planners and their consultants who are undertaking development of a transportation corridor management plan. The handbook also may be helpful to a broader set of people who are involved in corridor planning efforts – local officials; planning, zoning, and public works staff; transit service providers; corridor residents and businesspeople; and other interests.

Purpose of the Handbook

The idea for this handbook grew out of the recognition that many of Vermont's transportation needs can be most effectively addressed at the corridor level rather than on a piecemeal basis. Limited resources for transportation improvements at all levels of government are dictating more creative and collaborative approaches to solving – and preventing transportation problems. A corridor approach offers the opportunity for communities to collectively plot a future strategy which makes the best possible use of available resources, takes advantage of synergies to produce the best outcomes, and has a greater chance of becoming a reality – than would otherwise be the case if each community acted on its own.

Vermont Corridor Management Handbook – What's Included?

OBJECTIVES	Purpose, scope, and intended outcomes of a corridor plan.
PROCESS	Steps involved in developing a corridor plan.
TECHNICAL ANALYSIS	Data sources and analysis methods.
PARTICIPATION	Methods for involving stakeholders and the public.
SOLUTIONS	Approaches to selecting appropriate corridor management strategies, including both transportation and land use strategies.
IMPLEMENTATION	Mechanisms for implementation of corridor study recommendations and monitoring performance of the corridor over time.

Best Practices for Corridor Planning

This handbook lays out a set of best practices for corridor planning. Agencies embarking on a corridor planning effort are encouraged to follow these best practices and produce corridor management plans that are:

- *Comprehensive*, based on a full understanding of the dynamics of transportation and all interacting influences within the corridor;
- *Proactive*, seeking to identify and address transportation-related problems before they arise, rather than after they have grown to the point of being intolerable;
- *Visionary* in nature, meaning that the recommended strategies for the corridor arise from a shared vision for the corridor established by local communities and state agencies with jurisdiction over the corridor; and
- *Collaborative*, meaning that transportation agencies, local governments, stakeholders and the public at large all participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of the corridor plan.

A successful corridor management plan is one that state and regional planning agencies, municipalities, and other stakeholders in the corridor use as a blueprint for future action. The plan should be a *living* document that is updated periodically in response to changing conditions and needs. An effective corridor management plan is not a wish list of projects that may never be funded, but rather a balanced set of realistic transportation and land use strategies. Some of these strategies may be pursued immediately; others may need to wait for an appropriate or opportune time. The critical ingredient for success is a shared commitment to take responsibility for seeing that the strategies in the plan are implemented.

*Corridor Planning is:
Comprehensive
Proactive
Visionary
Collaborative*

A successful corridor management plan is a living document that provides a blueprint for action.

The Benefits of Corridor Management

Why undertake a corridor management plan effort?

- To identify and address transportation deficiencies before they turn into critical problems that can affect quality of life and limit economic development;
- To allow for development of coordinated transportation and land use solutions along a corridor – a far more effective approach than individual piecemeal initiatives that may act at cross-purposes;
- To bring diverse stakeholders together (local, regional, and state agencies, property owners, and others) and agree on mutually beneficial strategies as well as ongoing mechanisms for cooperatively pursuing these strategies;
- To save money by implementing non-capital intensive strategies (such as operational improvements, access management, or land use policies) as an alternative to expensive transportation capital investments;
- To develop creative strategies for supporting sustainable economic development in corridor communities; and
- To ensure that transportation needs are addressed in a manner that preserves and enhances Vermont's natural environment and the unique character of its communities.

What is a Corridor?



Definitions

A **corridor** is defined as:

“A broad geographic band ...

connecting population and employment centers...

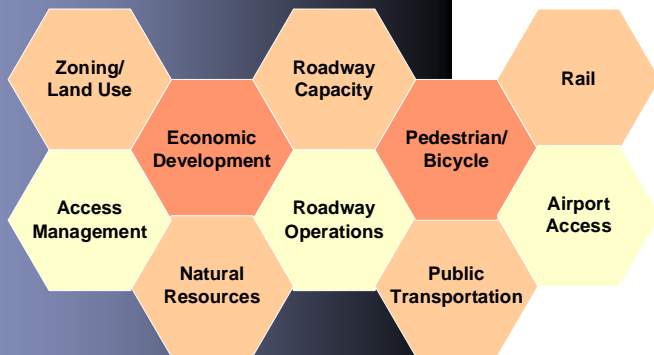
served by various transportation modes...

within which passenger and freight travel, land use, topography, environment and other characteristics are evaluated for transportation purposes.”

A corridor can vary in length from one mile to over 100 miles. In Vermont, most corridor studies will be defined to include a stretch of roadway, its right-of-way (including utilities, drainage, traffic control devices, and parallel sidewalks or pathways), adjacent land use development, and elements that compose the scenic view. In many cases, it will be appropriate to also include one or more parallel roadways and/or rail lines.

The definition of a **corridor study area** includes the corridor itself as well as nearby land areas and transportation facilities (e.g., airports, freight terminals) that influence travel demand in the corridor. The geographic boundaries of the study area typically coincide with geographic units used for reporting population, employment and travel demand data, such as cities, towns, or census tracts. This allows for use of readily available information on likely future growth patterns and transportation needs. However, the study area definition should be based on an understanding of travel patterns and needs rather than on data availability considerations.

What is Corridor Management?



The term **corridor management** refers to the practice of identifying and implementing a mutually supportive set of strategies to maintain and enhance access, mobility, safety, economic development, and environmental quality along the transportation corridor. A **corridor management study** or **corridor study** is a comprehensive assessment of issues, needs, and potential solutions to address these objectives. A corridor study should consider all modes, including transit, bicycling, and walking, as well as automobile and commercial vehicle travel along the corridor. It should consider operational improvements and maintenance as lower-cost, lower-impact alternatives to capital investment strategies. It also should consider land use strategies that address the impacts of growth patterns and local land use decisions on traffic conditions and travel demand.

A corridor management study has a long-term focus, addressing land use and transportation strategies to be undertaken over a 20-year or greater time horizon. It is conceptual and strategic in nature, and will typically not focus on development of specific projects. However, one possible outcome is that one or more capital improvements may be recommended for more detailed planning and design work. A corridor management study does not involve the development of detailed engineering designs, or produce formal environmental documentation of project impacts.

What is a Corridor Management Plan?

The corridor management study should result in a **corridor management plan** that includes a package of recommended land use and transportation strategies that comprehensively address present and future transportation needs. Types of strategies included in the plan may include:

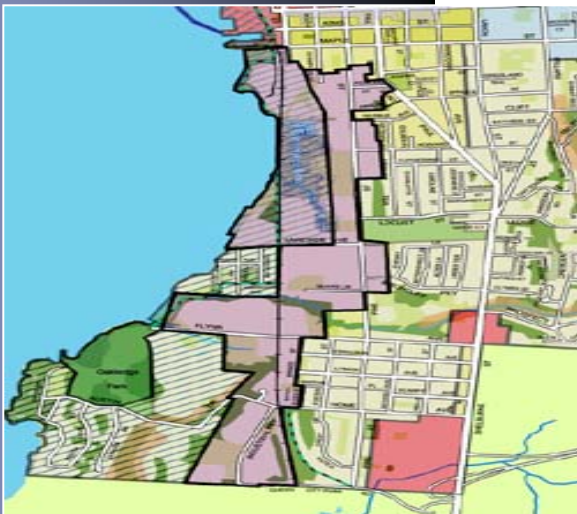
- Transportation improvements;
- Land use strategies such as zoning, land conservation, or access management;
- Landscaping, and preservation of right-of-way;
- Management tools and processes such as development guidelines, design guidelines, and plan oversight and monitoring; and
- Mechanisms for interjurisdictional cooperation.

A corridor management plan will ideally provide a mix of these strategies that are mutually reinforcing and consistent with an agreed-upon vision for the corridor. It also will provide a set of well-defined, prioritized actions, and define clear responsibilities to carry the strategies forward into implementation.

Must a Corridor Management Study be Comprehensive?

Studies are often performed that focus more narrowly on a specific topic within a corridor, such as access management or short-term solutions to traffic problems. These types of studies can be appropriate in many situations: to implement specific recommendations from a corridor management study, when funding is not available for a more comprehensive study, or when immediate, short-term needs and opportunities exist. This handbook can be used as a resource for these more narrowly focused studies. However, many of the intended benefits of a comprehensive corridor management study process – a synergistic approach that avoids conflicting, piecemeal actions, and an emphasis on broad participation, buy-in, and ongoing implementation – may not be realized with a more limited effort.

Relationship to Other Planning Activities

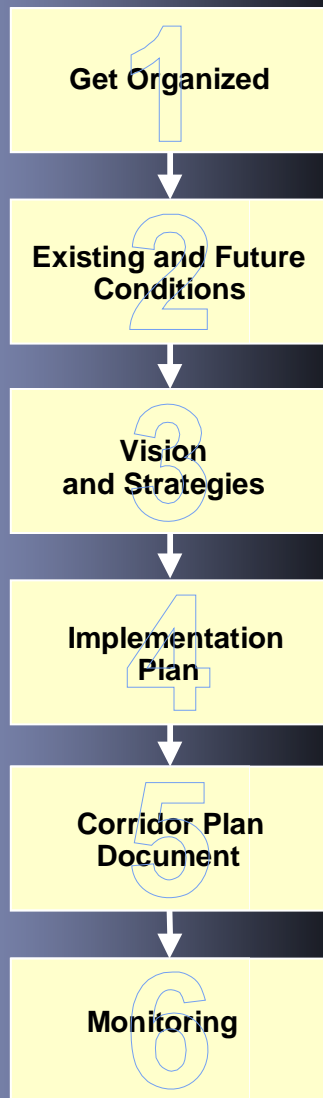


VTrans, the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO), the regional planning commissions (RPC), and local governments engage in a variety of other transportation and land use planning activities. The purpose of a corridor study is to support and complement these activities, rather than to duplicate them. Some of these other activities, and their relationship to corridor planning, are described in the following table.

Relationship between Corridor Planning and Other Planning Activities	
VTrans Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Modal Policy Plans [VTrans Policy and Planning Division]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define goals, objectives, and strategies for consideration in corridor studies – covering highways rail, public transit, and airports. Define corridors of statewide significance, such as the 16 origin-destination pairs identified in the Vermont Highway System Policy Plan (HSPP).
Regional Plans and Regional Transportation Plans (RTP) [CCMPO and Regional Planning Commissions]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define goals, objectives, and strategies for consideration in corridor studies. Recommendations of corridor management plans should be consistent with the Regional Plan and the RTP. Regional Plan and RTP updates should incorporate findings and recommendations of completed corridor studies.
State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) [VTrans Policy and Planning Division]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official list of state-programmed transportation projects to be initiated over the next three years, identifying costs, funding sources and schedules. A corridor study may result in specific project recommendations, which may be included in the STIP after going through the project development process.
Project Development Process [VTrans Program Development Division]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A corridor study may recommend project concepts that then proceed through the project development process. The corridor study can provide the basis for alternatives analysis and project definition, and also can be the process for establishing a Purpose and Need Statement. The corridor study can provide inputs to the project development process (e.g., existing conditions, analysis of secondary and cumulative impacts), and should be scoped to minimize redundancy with planning analysis required for project development.
Design Standards [VTrans Program Development Division]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State design standards for roadways and pedestrian/bicycle design should be used as a reference for developing corridor study recommendations. The Level of Improvement (LOI) policy suggests the scope of improvements that may be considered in the corridor study.
Access Management Policies and Plans [VTrans, CCMPO and RPCs, see also: http://www.vtaccessmanagement.info/AM_Vermont.htm]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corridor plans should include consideration of access management strategies. Strategies developed through corridor studies should be consistent with VTrans' classification of roadway segments by access management category, and with existing access management plans for the corridor.
Asset Management Policies and Programs [VTrans Policy and Planning Division]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VTrans' asset management systems can help to identify the condition and deficiencies of pavement, bridges, and other roadway elements along a corridor. Asset management systems also can assist in estimating the costs of ongoing maintenance and preservation work. A corridor study may result in recommendations regarding prioritization and coordination of projects in corridor.
Local Comprehensive Planning, Zoning Bylaws, and Capital Improvement Programs [Individual Jurisdictions]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The corridor study should address relevant corridor land use issues, including impacts of transportation improvements on development, and impacts of future land use changes on transportation needs. Local governments should incorporate recommendations emerging from corridor studies into comprehensive plan updates, bylaws (zoning and subdivision regulations) that implement these plans, and municipal capital improvement programs.
State Land Use Policies [Vermont Statutes and State Agencies]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scope, procedures, and recommendations of corridor studies should be compatible with statewide land use and development policies, including: the Vermont Land Use and Development Law (Act 250); Growth Management Act (Act 200, Title 24 VSA Chapter 117); Interstate Executive Order, Development Cabinet Law (Act 112); and Downtown Development Act.

Process, Products, and Outcomes of a Corridor Management Study

The corridor management study process involves six basic steps, which are described in the remaining sections of this handbook:



- **Step 1** – Get Organized;
- **Step 2** – Analyze Existing and Future Conditions;
- **Step 3** – Develop Vision and Strategies;
- **Step 4** – Develop Implementation Plan;
- **Step 5** – Finalize Document; and
- **Step 6** – Monitor Progress.

The outcome of the corridor management study process is the corridor management plan. The plan should be developed through consultation with corridor stakeholders and should have the support of VTTrans, the RPCs and/or MPO, local jurisdictions, residents, and other key stakeholders with interests in the corridor.

While each corridor planning effort must be adapted to study area needs and available resources, a comprehensive corridor management plan should include the following elements:

- An assessment of existing and future transportation, land use, and environmental conditions and operations in the corridor;
- A package of recommended strategies and actions that comprehensively address future transportation needs;
- A list of implementation steps and responsibilities, including a recommended timeline for implementation, and any threshold conditions that should trigger particular improvements; and
- Documentation of the process by which the corridor plan was developed and recommendations selected.

Resources

The appendices to this handbook provide additional resources that may be helpful for corridor planning, including:

- **Appendix A** – Data Resources Inventory;
- **Appendix B** – Analysis Methods;
- **Appendix C** – Funding Sources;
- **Appendix D** – Municipal Planning Tools;
- **Appendix E** – Land Use Strategies for Transportation Corridors: Examples from Other States;
- **Appendix F** – Additional Resources (example plans, other useful reference documents); and
- **Appendix G** – Glossary of terms and acronyms.