



Two Approaches to Moving the Needle: the Very Local & the Statewide

Community-Driven Multi-Modal Improvements in Brattleboro

Larry Lewack (Vermont Rail Action Network)

[VRAN](#) promotes the modernization and expansion of Vermont's rail network. Specific to this meeting, VRAN is working on station improvements in Brattleboro. The station lacks safety, way-finding, and ease of multi-modal connections. For passengers travelling north, the Brattleboro station is the first stop in Vermont. The community has convened on the issue and is working to implement safety upgrades and better signage. Larry's presentation sparked much discussion about the rail operations in the state. The current rail system in Vermont was not designed for same-day travel, especially if one wants to go north. The larger picture is that Amtrak must react to political pressures and funding cuts and must fight to maintain its current services, let alone expand them.

Dave Cohen (vBike)

Currently, the bike is seen as a kids' toy or tool for recreation rather than given serious weight as a transportation option. vBike is working to change that perception. The bike can be applied to many parts of life, as evidenced by the Fat Tire utility e-bikes, the [ELF](#), and the [PEBL](#), all of which can help navigate Vermont's hills, distances, and climate. When compared with electric vehicles, e-bikes have a battery pack that is 50 times smaller. When looking at the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan, a huge chunk of statewide energy use is in transportation. Human power is not mentioned as a renewable energy source, though there is the potential to travel many more miles with little energy. The barrier to using human power is often a person's unwillingness to purchase something like an e-bike because they're unable to picture its place in their daily life. vBike's "[Take It Home](#)" program lends out e-bikes for residents to try for up to three days. Brattleboro area bike shops are increasingly able to service e-bikes and are transitioning into green mobility centers. Electric assist bicycles and cargo bikes are a "great tool for local living" and will help our communities to re-inhabit the streets. We can reclaim our communities from "Automobilism," a tragedy of the commons.

Dr. Becky Jones (vBike, 350Brattleboro, Vermont Climate and Health Alliance)

The Vermont Health and Climate Alliance here is a new group of health professional looking at climate change, its drivers and mitigation, and accompanying health outcomes. Transportation, a major contributor to climate change, is of intense interest to the group. Less active transportation methods both contribute to climate change and result in worse health outcomes. More active transportation methods reduce greenhouse gas emissions and result in better health outcomes. The group is also investigating the social justice impacts of climate change and of our transportation system. Key messages:

- Movement is a fundamental right, not a choice.
- As new transportation systems are created, it is necessary to consider the very real physical and mental health impacts of a car-centric society and of climate change.
- The solutions to these problems exist, but they must be adopted in the policy realm.
- How do we ensure that we invest our transportation dollars effectively for better outcomes?

Transportation4Vermonters Coalition: A New Partner for Transportation Efficiency

Kate McCarthy (Vermont Natural Resources Council)

Transportation4Vermonters is a coalition of environmental, health, planning, transportation, and human services professionals that recognizes the need for a cross-sector advocacy on transportation issues. This group hopes to better build, coordinate, and amplify the advocacy efforts of their many stakeholder groups. Their intent is to do the following work: write comment letters, raise the profile for legislators, advocate for transportation legislation, submit statehouse testimony on transportation bills, coordinate member engagement with policymakers, track legislation, policies, and investments continuously, and advocate for good federal transportation policies, among other things. The existing partnerships coalition members have with organizations like VTEN is key for this new coalition to connect the "grassroots" with the "grasstops." TVT will practice research-based advocacy sourced from its members, based on a common set of principles developed through a slow and deliberate process. VTEN members see T4VT as an avenue to shepherd forward issues and ideas identified by VTEN.