

Circ-Williston Environmental Impact Statement Fact Sheet

The Project: Circ-Williston is intended to improve the transportation system in the four-mile corridor between I-89 in Williston and the Town of Essex. The previously proposed Circ Highway segments in Williston (“Segments A & B”) had been designed to serve this corridor. The Circ-Williston project replaces that former project and is not limited to consideration of those highway segments. (The Circ project in Essex was constructed and is open to traffic as VT state route 289. The Circ project in Colchester is included in the Chittenden County MPO long-range transportation plan, but will be addressed in a separate future Environmental Impact Statement).

Notice of Intent (NOI): The NOI was published in the Federal Register on November 26, 2004. It is a formal notice that the Federal Highway Administration, in cooperation with VTrans, is beginning an Environmental Impact Statement on the new project.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): An EIS is a study of the consequences of a major federally-funded project, conforming to the National Environmental Policy Act and federal regulations. It includes the definition of alternative improvements to meet a stated purpose and need, evaluation of their potential impacts on the human and natural environment, and selection of an alternative. A Draft and Final EIS will be published for public comment.

Scoping: The first phase of the study is to develop a scope of the project to be evaluated in the EIS. This includes the gathering input on the project’s purpose and need, the determination of potential improvements that may address that purpose and need, and the determination of the issues surrounding those improvements that should be studied.

Purpose and Need: The initial formulation of the project’s purpose is to improve access in the study corridor and remedy existing deficiencies, including congestion and safety problems. Purpose and need will be refined and stated in more detail during scoping.

Alternatives: The EIS will consider several alternatives for improving transportation in the study area. These include the No-Build Alternative (do nothing); strategies to better manage transportation demand (for example, ride-sharing programs or alternative work schedules); public transportation improvements; bicycle and pedestrian improvements; improvements to existing roadways, and roadways on new alignments (including but not limited to the previous design for the Circ Highway in Williston). Other alternatives might include combinations of these elements and design variations.

Issues: The scoping process will identify the issues to be studied, including aspects of the natural, cultural, and human environment. The EIS will consider the indirect and cumulative impacts of each alternative (the effect of each project alternative on land use, both alone and together with all other planned transportation projects.)

Public Input: The scoping process will be open and transparent. It will emphasize diverse opportunities for public input on the EIS scope including well-publicized public forums held in different locations in Chittenden County; three forums are currently planned. There will be widespread public information using www.circEIS.org, the project website. All comments received will be documented and considered. Public involvement will continue through all subsequent phases of the EIS.

The Process: Scoping is the first of five steps in the EIS process. It will be followed by screening a long list of preliminary alternatives, detailed evaluation of a short list of alternatives, narrowing toward an alternative/publication of the Draft EIS, and selection of an alternative in the Final EIS.

Schedule: Scoping will run through approximately April 2005. The entire study is expected to be completed in the spring of 2006.