

Vermont Local Roads – Legislative Report 2015

THE PROGRAM

The Vermont Local Roads program (VLR) provides assistance to municipal highway departments and town governments to improve their road networks by providing training, technical assistance, communication tools and information exchange.

MISSION AND VISION

Mission: To foster a safe, efficient, and environmentally sound surface transportation system by improving skills and increasing knowledge of the transportation workforce and decision makers.

Vision: Improve the quality and safety of the surface transportation system through collaborative partnerships, training and information exchange.

PROGRAM SERVICES

Workshops:

Based on our outreach from the Circuit Riders, the Listserv, phone conversations, email correspondence and key partner input, municipalities have identified several key training areas they would like to see offered in the near future. Trainings such as:

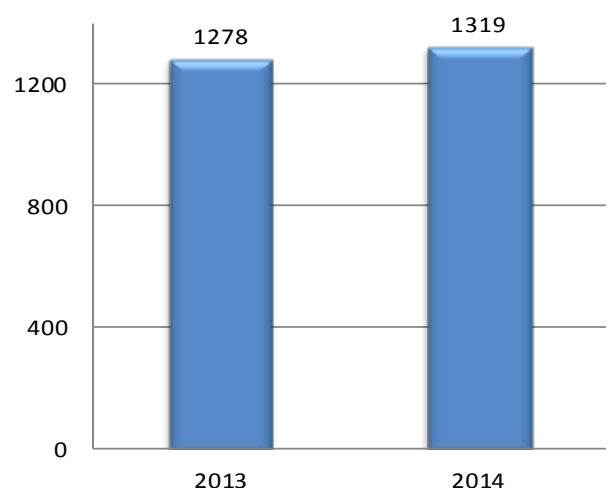
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|--------------------------------------|---|
| ✓ Construction safety | ✓ Equipment training |
| ✓ Work zone traffic control | ✓ Asset and pavement management systems |
| ✓ Winter maintenance | ✓ Innovative finance |
| ✓ Signs and signals | ✓ Management and supervisory skills |
| ✓ Paved and unpaved road maintenance | |
| ✓ Materials management | |

Vermont Local Roads currently serves many these and other training needs through workshops, webinar's, safety demonstrations, computer training, and sessions in the field and in the classroom and will plan to incorporate and consider all training requests that a municipality indicates helpful to their surface transportation needs.

The goal is to increase the total number of workshop offerings from 45 to 120 annually. This change incurs the programs availability to workshops currently being offered at the VTrans Training Center that are available for municipal staff to attend as well as increasing the number of workshop offerings produced through Vermont Local Roads. Attendance thus far for 2014:

- **137** workshop sessions
- **45** separate topics
- **1,319** total participants

Workshop Attendees



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Workshops were held in regional locations around the State utilizing municipal property as well as State district offices, including the VTrans Training Center. St. Albans, Rutland, Barnet, Colchester, Mendon, Westmore, St. Johnsbury and Bennington were just some of the towns where workshops were held since September, 2014.

Service Requests/Technical Assistance:

- **124 Towns** - total # of Vermont towns visited by a Vermont Local Roads Circuit Rider since May, 2014.
- **2 Service Requests** - From 1/1/2014 to 6/1/2014 (*please note this reflects the number of recorded service requests*).
- **235 Service Requests** - From 6/1/2014 to 12/31/2014 via email, telephone, listserv, circuit rider reports and website.

4 part-time temporary circuit riders continue to visit towns seeking input and providing technical assistance.

They are:

Del Thompson
Steve Jerome
John Stevens
Nelson Blanchard

Sample circuit rider technical assistance service request:

The town of Franklin called VLR this past September to inquire about possibly having a circuit rider visit their town to review their gravel roads. The town select board member who called was concerned that the road crew members that maintain the gravel roads in Franklin lack the training to properly grade their gravel roads. Steve Jerome, one of programs circuit riders and a long time employee of VLR arranged a meeting with the select board member to tour their gravel roads for review. After touring several concerning areas with the select board member Steve assured that the road crew was not only properly grading their roads but in fact they were some of the best he had witnessed this year. He assured the select board member that in the event the road crew needs training to call the program manager and we will arrange training for his crew.

The following comments were gathered by Del Thompson, one of the 4 part-time temporary Vermont Local Roads Circuit Riders. Del has visited more than 30 towns in the past 6 months and below are some recent comments from his visits:

NORWICH

Andrew Hodgson was rather disappointed with the way VLR has been operating. However, after spending some time with Andrew and explaining how the program is moving forward his attitude switched to very positive about the transition and said after our meeting (quote) I had renewed his interest in the program.

SWANTON (TOWN)

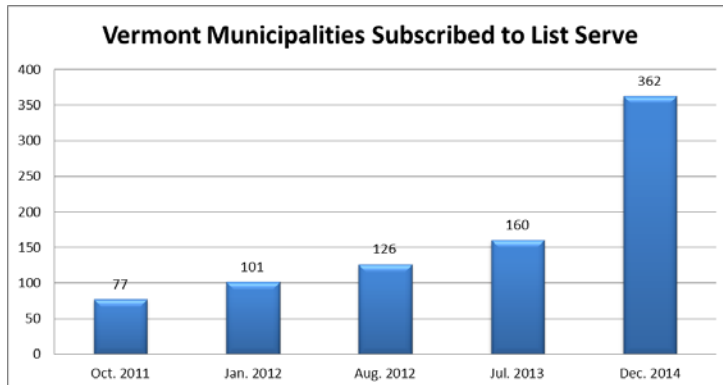
Harold Garrett road foreman is very positive about transition and was overwhelmed that someone from VLR had taken the time to meet with him. He has been with Swanton for more than 10 years and said to his knowledge no one from VLR has ever visited their shop.

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Communications and outreach:

Website - A new Website was created and provides resources such as workshop description and schedule, contact information, Roads Scholar information, technical resources (such as Tailgate Talks), current road conditions, written material (such as Newsletters and directory of officials), classifieds section, listserv information and registration as well as Facebook and other media outlets.

Newsletter – a total of **3** newsletters were produced and distributed to more than **5,600 recipients**. The newsletter is also available electronically via the VLR website as well as distributed on our listserv.



Calendar – An annual VLR calendar was produced in December of 2014 and distributed with informational content for municipalities which included safety related data and information from our partners, statewide commodity contracts for towns to participate, as well as Roads Scholar program information.

Listserv – A new listserv was also created to provide users with a more updated and current platform to improve users abilities to communicate with their peer towns and communities. The upgrade allows a broader bandwidth to allow larger materials to be posted without crashing the system as well as improved user options to simplify the listserv member's use of the system itself.

The VLR Listserv, which has grown by **126%** in just 6 months, acts as the key information exchange tool for the program. This service allows towns to communicate with each other as well as open discussions and questions to other communities for their input on any particular town related subject.

Partnerships:

Vermont Local Roads has partnered with the following on projects, workshops, and related activities.

- Vermont League of Cities and Towns (*renewed collaboration*)
- Vermont Municipal Highway Association (*Provide support to this important municipal program*)
- UVM Extension Service
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (*Providing new workshops in collaboration*)
- Vermont Emergency Management (*Sharing vital emergency information on the new Listserv and website*)
- Resource Conservation and Development Districts
- Regional Planning Commissions & the MPO (*renewed partnership and continued presence*)
- American Public Works Association (APWA) (*New presence and joining forces as needed*)
- National Association of County Engineers (NACE)

In addition local roads staff has attended 9 road foreman meetings, 4 regional Transportation Advisory Council (TAC) meetings, 3 select board meetings, several conferences and many transportation related webinars.

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PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED FOR 2015:

- ✓ Increase the number of workshop offerings to municipalities
- ✓ Improved collaboration with state and national partners
- ✓ Attend road foreman meetings, transportation advisory committee meetings and select board meetings for any feedback on how the program is meeting the needs of the municipalities
- ✓ Increase the number of on-site technical assistance by our circuit riders and branch manager
- ✓ Increase the listserv membership to include ALL municipalities so that we are reaching our target audience with the information they require
- ✓ Bring more training directly to towns in their regional locations
- ✓ Enroll more municipal staff into the Roads Scholar program and encourage participation

STAFF:

Kevin Gadapee – Program Manager – 100%

Circuit Rider – 100% (Position advertised)

Program Coordinator – 100% (Position under development)

FUNDING:

FHWA provides core funding of \$165,000 annually which must be matched dollar for dollar. VTrans provides \$235,000 to match the Vermont Local Roads Program.

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| FY 2015 budget: | \$165,000 - FHWA |
| | <u>\$235,000 - VTrans</u> |
| | \$400,000 (level funded) |