
Memo

DATE: November 19, 2019

TO: Williston Selectboard

FROM: Erik Wells, Assistant to the Town Manager

RE: TRADER LANE PROJECT, REVISED MEMO

The extension of Trader Lane to create a grid street connection from Marshall Avenue to US Route 2 has been a long-discussed project by the Town. Staff has been working to establish the pathway for completing this project by utilizing public/private partnerships to leverage the financial investment required. This memo will outline the history of the project, it's current status and possible next steps. Staff seeks direction from the Selectboard whether to move forward with the Trader Lane project or to no longer continue these efforts.

Background

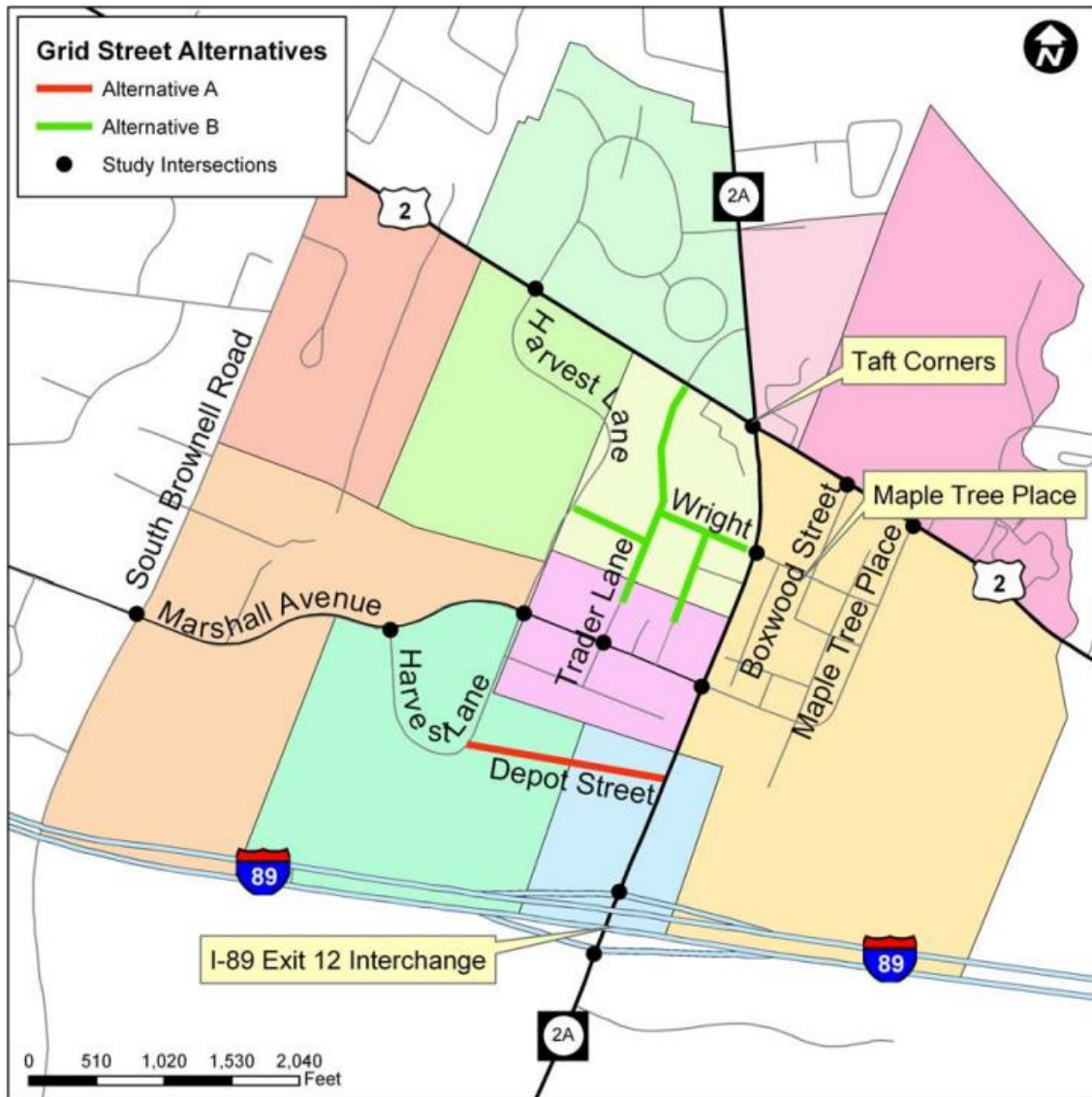
The concept of grid streets in Taft Corners has been discussed for over two decades. The construction of Trader Lane is addressed in the Town Plan as a high priority transportation improvement project:

6.4.1 Connect Marshall Avenue and Williston Road (Trader Lane). Extend Wright Avenue West to Harvest Lane. Working with landowners to build these grid streets in the Taft Corners area...will provide better access and relieve congestion...

The Town Plan also states:

3.1.1 Work with Developers to Build Grid Streets. Williston will support and encourage landowners to build the grid streets that have been planned for the Taft Corners area west of route 2A between Marshall Avenue and Williston Road...These streets will provide the access needed for a more intense, pedestrian-friendly development pattern. They should also help relieve congestion on Route 2A and Marshall Avenue.

A grid street study for the Taft Corners area was completed in 2006 by Resource Systems Group (RSG). The study concludes that the proposed grid streets in the area would have a positive impact on traffic congestion. The following is a visual of the grid streets from the 2006 report:



In addition to the transportation components of alleviating traffic congestion and enabling a more pedestrian-friendly development pattern, grid streets are a proven public infrastructure asset to promote economic development. This section of the commercial center of Town has a number of undeveloped lots currently and the addition of grid streets, starting with Trader Lane, provide the connections to continue the development of this area by improving access.

During the circ alternatives discussion Trader Lane was not approved for funding. The Vermont Agency of Transportation did agree to award \$450,000 to the Town for intersection improvements that would result in a new 4-way signalized intersection at Trader Lane, Route 2 and Helena Drive. The Town received this funding award over 5 years ago, and the availability of these funds to the Town could be put in jeopardy if this project is not moved forward.

Current Project Status

In order to complete the Trader Lane project two stakeholder partners have been engaged to explore public/private partnerships, and both are interested in making such an arrangement with the Town.

A current estimated project budget is included at the end of this report. The current overall cost estimate for Trader Lane is \$1,965,562. Current funds secured toward this project by the Town (inclusive of the VTrans funding for the intersection) are \$1,093,000. Taft Corners Associates (TCA) is the principal property owner of the land both developed and undeveloped that would benefit from the addition of Trader Lane. TCA is willing to provide some contribution toward the funding gap and expressed a willingness to engage other potential partners to try to close the gap. TCA has had some positive results, but is still working through these conversations with other potential partners. An update on additional potential partner's willingness to contribute is expected in the next 1-2 months. TCA would look for its funds to be applied using the Town's new amended zoning bylaw that allows for a credit toward future transportation impact fees as follows:

45.5.2 Credit for construction of improvements prior to development. Where an applicant constructs or contributes to the construction of a transportation improvement that is or will be necessary to directly serve trips created by their future development, that development shall receive "credit" against its transportation impact fee liability up to 100% of the cost of the construction of the improvement or the amount of the contribution toward the improvement made by the applicant.

The utilization of this public/private partnership would infuse the necessary capital required to complete the project. The up-front investment by private parties allows the asset of the road to be built with a future credit toward the transportation impact fees that will be required as the undeveloped parcels in the area are built out.

In addition, TCA has expressed interest in offering the Town the additional right-of-way it holds needed for Trader Lane as a public road without a fee. This is a significant savings for the Town as the right-of-way at this location is highly valued.

The second public/private partnership would be with Vermont Technical College (VTC) as another stakeholder in this project. The original alignment design of Trader Lane and its connection at Route 2 created some complications with an additional property owner in the area for right-of-way access. To resolve this issue Trader Lane can be realigned so the 4-way intersection with Route 2 and Helena Lane is shifted to the west. VTC is willing to provide the right-of-way for the intersection realignment through the land where the Vermont Sandwich Company was located.

Next Steps and Potential Timeline

If the Selectboard would like to continue with the Trader Lane project, the next step would be entering into memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with TCA and VTC to formalize the discussions that have taken place with staff to date. A component of the MOU with TCA would be discussing how its funding is applied to the project and at what stage(s). MOUs with other funding partners would also be required. In terms of process, draft MOUs would be prepared by staff in consultation with the Town Attorney, and brought to the Selectboard for approval.

What follows would be a preliminary timeline for completing the construction of Trader Lane:

December 2019 – January 2020: MOUs agreed upon between stakeholders

January 2020 – October 2020: Roadway design finalized, permits acquired

Fall 2020 – Project sent out to construction bid and awarded to contractor

Calendar Year 2021 – Roadway construction

Project Budget**Expenses**

Item	Cost
Engineering & Permitting	\$120,000
Right-of-Way (based on TCA donation)	\$83,137
Construction (engineer's estimate)	\$1,762,426
TOTAL	\$1,965,562

Revenue

Source	Amount
Town funds (impact fees collected)	\$591,000
State funds	\$448,000
Cost Share from Private Partners	\$917,562
TOTAL	\$1,965,562

*Note, there exist some opportunities for construction cost savings or delaying parts of the project. DPW conducted an analysis and up to \$262,000 was identified.