UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 1
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OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

October 29, 2009

Kenneth R. Sikora, Jr.
Environmental Program Manager
Federal Highway Administration
P.O. Box 568
Montpelier, Vermont 05601

Re: Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Southern Connector/Champlain Parkway Project, Chittenden County, Vermont CEQ # 20090336

Dear Mr. Sikora:

The Environmental Protection Agency, in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, has reviewed the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the Southern Connector/Champlain Parkway project in Burlington, Vermont.

The FSEIS evaluates proposed changes to portions of a previously approved 2.3 mile alignment extending from the I-189 interchange with Shelburne Street (US Route 7), northerly and westerly to the Burlington City Center District (CCD). This highway segment, known as the Burlington Southern Connector/Champlain Park Way Project, is intended to relieve severe traffic congestion and safety problems in the southern part of the City of Burlington. The preferred alternative described in the FSEIS is for the construction of a 1.9 mile road circumventing the Pine Street Barge Canal Superfund site. Based on our review of the FSEIS we have no objections to the project as proposed but offer the following suggestions for consideration as FHWA and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS) work to finalize the project design.

Wetland Mitigation

While we do not believe the project will result in significant impacts to the aquatic environment, the project will require a federal Clean Water Act Section 404 permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers. EPA intends to work with the Corps and FHWA/VTRANS during the development of appropriate mitigation for wetland impacts, if required. A discussion of mitigation provided in Section 4.5.1 of the FSEIS explains that FHWA/VTRANS are planning to use mitigation previously completed in 1983 for the Northern Connector for this project. EPA disagrees with this approach as project impacts and federal mitigation requirements have changed since the original plan was developed

over 26 years ago. EPA looks forward to working with FHWA/VTRANS and the Corps to develop a mitigation plan to address the project's impacts to wetlands.

Low Impact Development (LID) and Stormwater

Since our review of the DSEIS several years ago we have increasingly encouraged project proponents to incorporate LID approaches into stormwater management plans. EPA recommends that FHWA/VTRANS consider the use of LID options for the project that can minimize the potential for indirect aquatic impacts to nearby waters of the United States. LID options include (but are not limited to) porous pavement, bio-retention, rain gardens, bio-swales, and gravel wetlands for paved surfaces. Additional information on LID options and specifications is available at the University of NH Stormwater Center website, and the websites included below.

LID Websites
http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/costs07/factsheet.html
http://www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/storm/chap12.asp
http://www.lid-stormwater.net/background.htm

In addition, please feel free to contact Trish Garrigan of EPA's Office of Ecosystem Protection at 617-918-1583 to obtain a copy of draft technical guidance on LID and to learn more about LID options.

Other
We note an inaccuracy in the FSEIS regarding the Pine Street Barge Canal Coordinating Council (page 1-7) which states that, "the council is still active and continues to meet and sponsor technical workgroup meetings through which the public and other stakeholders in the superfund process can participate in investigative and remedial planning." The coordinating council's mission ended with the selection of a remedy in the 1998 record of decision and it is our understanding that it is no longer an active working group.

Please contact Timothy Timmermann of EPA's Office of Environmental Review at 617-918-1025 with any comments or questions about this letter.

Sincerely,

Ira W. Leighton
Acting Regional Administrator