

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

The Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC) is a compact of ten (10) municipalities in east-central Vermont. It was founded in 1966 and is a political subdivision of state government organized under 24 V.S.A. Sub-Chapter 3. The Commission serves the towns of Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor. The MARC's activities and programs are governed by a ten-person Board of Commissioners; each appointed by the legislative body of their member town, with assistance from up to three "at-large" Commissioners as appointed by the Board of Commissioners. In addition, the Board has the responsibility of hiring staff to carry out the goals and policies of the MARC.

The primary intent of the MARC and its advisory committees has always been to assist with and advocate for the planning and development activities of its member towns. The MARC exists primarily to provide technical assistance to its member towns; assist in mediating inter-jurisdictional planning and development issues that arise between member communities; facilitate discussion and understanding between local and state entities; develop plans, policies, strategies, and procedures for addressing issues that are regional in scope; assist communities with downtown revitalization and community development projects; annually compile, review, and prioritize regional transportation improvement projects for submission to the Agency of Transportation; and to serve as an information resource for member towns and residents.

ACT 181

RPCs are actively working to inform our communities about Act 181, to update our regional plans to address the requirements in Act 181, and to assist member municipalities to address the requirements of Acts 47 and 181. This year, our related activities have included the following activities:

- Conducted significant levels of community outreach to educate about and inform our ongoing Act 181-related Regional Plan update process.
- Developed an online story map and interactive mapping tool to provide access to and the ability to comment on our ongoing draft regional plan future land use maps.
- Coordinated through VAPDA to develop the Regional Future Land Use Map Methodology.
- Developing updates to our regional plan per Act 181 including, but not limited to, the land use and housing chapters and the future land use map.
- Attended many town board meetings and meetings with partner organizations to get input on draft regional plan updates.
- Developed a sample zoning bylaw to improve internal consistency with zoning bylaw modernization in accordance with Act 181 as well as Act 47.
- Assisted towns with integrating Act 47 and Act 181 into zoning bylaw updates.

BROWNFIELDS

Environmental site assessments and clean-up allow properties to be sold, developed or re-developed in ways that benefit the local and state economy, increase housing opportunities, create or retain jobs, and protect public health and the environment. MARC continues to manage a Brownfields Reuse Program with a recently awarded EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant of

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

\$500,000 and supplemental funding towards the EPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for total funding of \$4.1 million.

MARC continues to administer a statewide \$1 million Brownfields Assessment Grant Program for the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development to provide assessment funding to RPCs statewide.

Over the past fiscal year, MARC has provided brownfields assistance for 14 properties in 5 towns:

- Springfield: Jones and Lamson, Park Street School (Black River Innovation Campus), Parks and Woolson, Edgar May Foundry, Clinton Street Waterline, and Toonerville Path extension project.
- Windsor: 133-139 Main St. (Central & Main), Former Windsor Gas and Light, and the Windsor Railyards.
- Andover: Andover Town Office.
- Chester: Residential properties on Cummings Rd. and Amsden Hill, Chester Teen Center.
- Bennington: Bennington High School Redevelopment Project.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic growth is supported best when development efforts are partnered with solid planning functions. To this end, RPCs work with towns and in strong partnership with Regional Development Corporations (RDCs) in several ways, including development of comprehensive strategies that will help to position Vermont for long term economic gain.

- Worked with our partner organizations to update the East Central Vermont Economic Development District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- Supported efforts by the Springfield Regional Development Corporation to assist area business apply to funding programs, such as the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive and Local Food Promotion Program.
- Assisted three towns to consider and prepare to apply for Neighborhood Development Area designation.
- Partnered with regional stakeholders through Next Chapter Roundtable and on-going stakeholder meetings, to identify workforce, housing, and mental health priorities essential to long-term economic resilience and development.
- Continue to serve on boards of both the Okemo Valley Region Chamber of Commerce (OVRCC) and Springfield on the Move (SOM).

CLEAN WATER AND INFRASTRUCTURE

RPCs work with the Agency of Natural Resources to assist with completion of the EPA required watershed plans. RPCs also work with municipalities to implement river corridor assessments in local planning and regulations which result in better and safer growth management decisions.

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

- Continued to administer the Enhancement Development, Design and Implementation Block Grant (EDDIBG) program of roughly \$3.2 million on behalf of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) to support statewide design and implementation of water quality and flood resilience improvements.
- Assisted Reading and Weathersfield with ongoing village water and wastewater feasibility studies.
- Assisted Cavendish with capital planning for their water and sewer systems, including making recommendations for increased rates, which have already been implemented by the town.
- Supported the efforts of 10 towns to construct road drainage improvements under the Grants-in-Aid program bringing many priority town road segments into compliance with the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) drainage standards.
- Assisted the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC with a bi-state stormwater improvements project, including conducting audits of local stormwater regulations in the MARC region, and identifying on-the-ground stormwater treatment practices (STPs).

ENERGY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A renewed focus on clean, renewable, sustainable and affordable energy presents Vermont with great opportunities and significant challenges. RPCs integrate energy planning with land use, transportation and natural resources efforts, and work with municipalities to assist with project implementation. RPCs participate in Section 248 proceedings and support comprehensive planning at the local and regional level to inform the permitting process.

- Assisted local energy committees and other municipal officials to implement energy plans.
- Participated in the review process for multiple energy projects (Section 248).
- Provided guidance to local officials on Act 174 and enhanced local energy plans.
- Assisted the towns of Cavendish and Weathersfield with local energy planning.
- Continued to assist VT Buildings and General Services with the Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP).
- Assisted member municipalities with MERP energy audits and implementation grants.
- Supported the State in the development of a climate planning framework for VT municipalities.
- Utilized the LEAP model to update and refine energy data and targets for inclusion in regional and local enhanced energy plans.

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND DISASTER RECOVERY

RPCs play key roles in the mitigation and preparedness phases of emergency management in partnership with Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont Homeland Security Unit, VTrans and the Agency of Natural Resources. RPCs provide direct staff to the State Emergency Operations Center, administrative support to the Local Emergency Planning Committees and coordination among responders and planners throughout the State's four Public Safety Districts. RPC's also

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

help update floodplain bylaws and FEMA-required hazard mitigation plans, and assist with declared disaster events.

- Ten municipalities in the region (100%) currently have adopted hazard mitigation plans.
- Five towns protect river corridors or have interim protections that allow them the maximum ERAF rate.
- Served as Local Liaison during storm events.
- Conducted outreach to municipalities on the ongoing FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area map updates.
- Administered the flood hazard bylaws program for the VT DEC to complete necessary municipal bylaw updates across Vermont in a timely way in advance of new Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) from the active Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) map updates.
- Assisted the Town of Springfield with evaluating enrollment in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) Program. CRS encourages municipal adoption of flood resiliency improvements that exceed the minimum requirements for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) through reductions in annual premium costs for NFIP policy holders.
- Assisted the Town and Village of Ludlow with the Resilience Initiative for Vermont Empowerment and Recovery (RIVER) project. RIVER involved public meeting facilitation to solicit public input for flood resiliency projects, as well as grant writing support to submit a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) application under HMGP-DR-4720.
- Facilitated quarterly Regional Emergency Management Committee meetings.
- Continued to provide guidance to Cavendish, Ludlow and Reading with flood hazard and/or river corridor review on an as-needed basis under MOUs with each municipality.

EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

RPCs provide assistance to municipalities and partner organizations with a variety of healthy communities planning efforts and to address state initiatives on equity and environmental justice.

- Participated in the Springfield Area Working Communities Challenge to increase workforce participation throughout the region by addressing systemic barriers associated with transportation, childcare, housing, education, and recovery.
- Engaged diverse organizations through MARC's various health and quality of life projects.
- Served on the Mount Ascutney Hospital food security steering committee and working groups.
- Assisted two towns with municipal health planning.
- Participated in regional meetings held in partnership with Regional Planning Commissions and Vermont Public Health.
- Participated in Green Peak Alliance and The Collaborative meetings.
- Participated in Project Action meetings.

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

GRANT WRITING AND ADMINISTRATION

RPC services include a broad range of grant writing, project administration and project management assistance for member towns and partner organizations, including the following activities this past year:

- Assisted the Town of Springfield with fundraising and provided project management assistance for the removal of the Springfield Reservoir Dam in Weathersfield.
- Assisted the Town of Springfield with fundraising and provided project management assistance for the removal of the Valley Street dam.
- Assisted the Town of Springfield with fundraising and provided project management assistance for remediation of the Lincoln Street mass slope failure.
- Provided technical assistance with BRIC and HMGP-DR 4720 applications.
- Assisted Weathersfield with BRIC grant administration for the Bowen Hill Scoping Project.
- Assisted Weathersfield with FRCF grant administration for the Maple Street Buyout project.
- Assisted towns with 10 Better Roads Category A applications for road erosion inventories, and assisted Baltimore with a successful Better Roads Category B application and Weathersfield with a Category D application this year.
- Assisted towns with four successful Transportation Alternative Program applications (2 in Springfield, 1 in Weathersfield, and 1 in Ludlow).
- Provided project management services for West Windsor's Better Connections project: the Between the Bridges and Beyond master planning project.
- Provided municipal project management services for transportation projects including four in Springfield (Toonerville Trail Extension, Clinton Street Road Diet, Downtown Northern Gateway Feasibility Study, and the Salt Shed Feasibility Study), and one in Weathersfield (Salt Shed Feasibility Study).
- Assisted the Bunker Hill mobile home community in Windsor to apply for funding to make critical improvements to their wastewater system.
- Providing professional administrative and project management services for the cleanup at Park Street School and Edgar May Health and Recreation Center.
- Continue to provide professional administrative and project management services for the redevelopment at Park Street School associated with the Black River Innovation Campus.
- Helped towns to prepare applications for and (in rural towns) to administer Municipal Planning Grants, including Ludlow's town zoning amendments project and West Windsor's Housing Study.

HOUSING

RPCs provide local technical assistance to member municipalities to plan for and help to implement strategies to address our housing needs. MARC employs a part-time housing navigator to act as a resource to encourage local housing production. MARC staff supports local Housing Commissions and Planning Commissions with ongoing housing planning activities. Over this past year, MARC has participated in the following housing activities:

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

- Staff have served as members of the Chester Housing Commission and Springfield's Middle Income Housing Committee.
- Assisted West Windsor with their ongoing Housing Study.
- Developed a local housing analysis and action plan for Ludlow.
- Coordinated with the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust and Springfield Housing Authority with project development and community outreach efforts.
- Continued to refer to our 2024 regional housing suitability study to help towns to identify potential housing project sites within walkable village areas served by municipal infrastructure.
- Continued to implement the recommendations of the Keys to the Valley housing initiative, including collaborating with our partner organizations to develop a super-regional housing utility business plan.
- Developed local housing targets. Assisted towns with data analysis to quantify local housing needs, and the identification of tools to do something about it.

PLANNING AND ZONING

RPCs act as a cost-effective professional planning staff for many of Vermont's municipalities. Work in recent years has been focused on improving town plans and local permitting through education and enhanced consultations (on-site training), bylaw modernization, facilitating transition to Development Review Boards, and implementing goals for economic development and flood resiliency. Current and clear plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. This work is supported through local and regional planning funds, local contributions and other grants. All technical assistance provided this year is shown on the At Work map; highlights include:

- Provided a range of services to assist with municipal plan updates and amendments for Andover and Weathersfield.
- Helped planning commissions to prepare zoning and/or subdivision bylaw updates in Andover, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield and Windsor.
- Assisted Ludlow and Springfield to update their flood hazard bylaws, including new river corridor provisions.
- Assisted with local efforts to implement municipal plans and supporting plans, including in Andover, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor and Windsor.
- Worked with Cavendish to finalize a Capital Budget and Program.
- Provided local technical assistance to Zoning Administrators which can range from inquiries about application fee schedules, application completeness, interpretation of certain zoning provisions, and other issues.
- Hosted quarterly Zoning Administrator Roundtables for peer-to-peer networking and education.

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Through contract with VTrans, RPCs coordinate the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI). This effort has provided a statewide framework for public involvement in planning the improvements to Vermont's transportation system, with local communities represented through regional Transportation Advisory Committees (TACs). Each regional TAC prioritizes projects, identifies local and regional transportation needs, and provides the platform for public involvement in the planning and development of the state's transportation system. RPCs serve as the point of delivery for the statewide transportation planning process to support local, regional, state and federal transportation network advancement.

RPC: Mount Ascutney Regional Commission		
Objective 1 - Enhance Cooperation and Coordination between VTrans, RPC Regions and Municipalities		
Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
A # of TAC meetings held	7	
B # of non-municipal TAC members actively engaged in transportation planning	8	Springfield Airport Commission Joint Meeting
C # of municipalities actively engaged in transportation planning	10	
D # of RPC coordination activities with municipalities and VTrans	20	Route 5 Corridor Survey; Springfield IM 091-1(83); Regional O&D meetings; Annual O&D Conference; Spri. Airport Commission mtgs; Spri. Community Health Team; West Windsor highway timesheet assistance; equity framework; Bike/Ped Integration Program; Windsor BF 0113(88); Reading ER P23-1(404); RPC Energy Planner's meeting on EVSE incentives; MRGP trainings; Quarterly Vermont Rail Advisory Council Meeting; STIP Public Hearing; Springfield STP 016-2(26); Workforce Improvement Board/Working Communities Challenge Meetings; Working Communities Challenge Transportation Subcommittee Meetings; VT Walk/Bike Summit.
Objective 2 - Better Connect Federal, Regional and Statewide Transportation Planning		
Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
E # of regional transportation plans that are current (within 8 years)	1	2022 Regional Transportation Plan
F # of Act 250 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	0	We have not had any Act 250 or Section 248 applications for a project of regional significance with a transportation impact in recent years.
G # of Section 248 applications with RPC comments relating to transportation	0	
H # of coordination activities in support of regional public transit providers	3	Southeast Vermont Transit Board Meetings; Upper Valley Transportation Management Association Meetings; Working Communities Challenge Transportation Subcommittee.
I # of VTrans committees that involves RPC staff participation	6	Better Roads Class A funding planning group; Active Transportation Partners; Vermont State Design Standards Project Steering Group
J # of regions participating in Project Prioritization	1	VPSP2 currently inactive
Objective 3 - Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities		
Performance Indicator	Value	Notes & Explanation
K # of municipalities participating in road foreman meetings annually	5	Cavendish, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield and West Windsor
L-1 # of municipalities assisted with transportation related grants	10	Andover, Baltimore, Cavendish, Chester, Ludlow, Reading, Springfield, Weathersfield, West Windsor, Windsor
L-2 # of grant programs assisted municipalities with for transportation related grants	8	Bike/Ped, TAP/MHSMP, Better Connections, Better Roads CAT-A, B, C & D, Municipal Park and Ride, Grants in Aid, HSIP, VTrans Maintenance District Class 2 Grants.
M % of budget spent on municipal technical assistance	31%	25% of Task 3, combined with Tasks 4-6

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

N	# of municipal transportation inventories conducted	7	Cavendish and Proctorsville Sidewalk Inventory Update, Chester Sidewalk Inventory Update, West Windsor Sidewalk Inventory Update, Ludlow Town Road Erosion Inventory, Ludlow Town Bridge/Culvert Inventory (partial), Ludlow Village Road Erosion Inventory, Ludlow Village Bridge/Culvert Inventory (partial),
O	# of municipal transportation related feasibility/project definition studies completed/undertaken	0	
P	# of municipalities assisted with transportation element of municipal/town plan	0	
Q	# of road erosion inventories in support of the MRGP completed using TPI dollars and using other funding sources	3+	Completed Baltimore at the beginning of SFY25, August 2024, completed Ludlow Town and Ludlow Village REIs in June 2025. Cavendish REIs half done as of June 30, 2025.

Objective 4 - Deliver Results that Advance VTrans Strategic and Long-Range Transportation Plans

Performance Indicator		Value	Notes & Explanation
R	# of data collection activities conducted specifically for VTrans	64	10 Complete Streets, 25 traffic counts, 17 park and ride counts, 12 bike/ped counts

Objective 5 - Provide a Mechanism for Improved Public Outreach and Education

Highlight of innovative, resourceful, and/or collaborative efforts from Region		
	<p>Report on unique examples of situations (unplanned events, addressing needs that arise, etc.) that occurred during the prior year in which the RPC conducted outreach or education beyond that of routine task efforts.</p> <p>List examples of innovative transportation planning efforts the RPC engaged in:</p> <p><i>See Guidance for examples from prior reporting.</i></p>	
1	Ongoing maintenance of the Ride Windsor County bike route map, guide and website.	
2	Engaged with Towns to establish regional and local goals of zero deaths on all roadways, in coordination with Safe Streets and Roads for All and Vision Zero.	

MAPPING

In addition to enhancing the RPC work, RPC's provide municipalities, state agencies and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.

- Highlights of activities:
 - Prepared maps for municipal plans, zoning bylaws and other planning projects.
 - Continued to integrate "ArcGIS Field Maps" into regular fieldwork activities.
 - Updated GIS mapping data of municipal water and sewer systems to better inform housing initiatives and other planning efforts.
 - Developed a draft Future Land Use Map for the ongoing Act 181 updates to our Regional Plan.

UNMET NEEDS AND OTHER PROJECTS

- MARC coordinated with Cavendish, Ludlow, Plymouth and TRORC with the ongoing Black River Flood Resilience Study, which will identify and scope priority projects that can mitigate against future community flooding. This effort is funded through MTAP, MARC's ACCD funding, and contributions from Cavendish and Ludlow.

Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

FY 2025 Annual Report

ADMINISTRATION & FUNDING

The MARC is funded by performance and project contracts with federal, state and local levels of government, foundation support, and contributions from member municipalities. MARC's FY 2025 budget was \$2,227,521. Core funding provided by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development of \$493,116 leveraged about \$924,122 in additional federal sources.

MARC has an annual independent audit conducted by Certified Public Accountants. A single audit was not necessary for the past fiscal year. No significant findings nor material weaknesses have been identified this year.

MARC serves 10 municipalities and operates with a Board of Commissioners that develops and implements policies and oversees a staff of 14.

'AT WORK' MAP

MARC has updated its At Work Map depicting the range of services provided to its member municipalities in FY25. The map is available on the next page, and online at: <https://vapda-report-vapda.hub.arcgis.com/>

MARC At Work-FY2025

