

Agency of Transportation  
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Joint Fiscal Committee  
September 13, 2011  
Irene Briefing – VTrans

### Closure Status

State Route Segments Closed Post-Storm		139
State Route Segments Reopened		124
Varying Levels of Service	92	
One Lane Only	20	
Emergency Vehicles Only	12	
<i>State Route Segments Closed Today</i>		15
State Bridges Closed Post-Storm		34
State Bridges Reopened		13
<i>State Bridges Closed Today</i>		21
Total Closures Road & Bridge Post-Storm		173
Total Reopened (Many limited service)		137
<b>Total Road and Bridge Closures Today</b>		<b>36</b>

### VTrans Priorities and Goals Immediately After Irene

- ❖ Provide safety and emergency access to all Vermonters affected by the storm.
  - VTrans employees worked throughout the storm closing roads, erecting barricades and helping Vermonters during the flooding.
- ❖ Provide emergency access to the 13 isolated towns.
  - Achieved access to 12 towns within 24 hours, access to Wardsboro the next day.
- ❖ Prioritize work at road closures that inhibited utility crews from restoring power.
  - On September 1, in the Dummerston ICC, we had a total of 5,800 residences with power outages. On September 2, we had a total of 1,200.
- ❖ Prioritize work on east/west connections, routes 4 and 9 as key corridors for mobility and commerce.
  - Route 9 opened twelve days after Irene hit and route 4 is anticipated to open 20 days after significant portions were washed away.
- ❖ Ensuring all affected roads are in a condition ready for winter maintenance.
  - Winter preparations are currently underway.

### External Support

- National Guard from five states.
- Neighboring States' Transportation agencies
- Private contracting community
- Associated General Contractors
- Regional Planning Commissions
- Public Support

### Upcoming Progress and Challenges

Communication to the traveling public – Google maps is updated twice daily

As mentioned, we expect route 4 to be opened for public use by this weekend.

Some very tough spots are being scoped and/or reconstructed and the last 35 closures will take some time. Bridge and road closures are concentrated on Rts. 100, 12, 12A, 131 with perhaps the most significant hurdles on Rt. 106 in Weathersfield, Rt. 131 in Cavendish and 107 between Stockbridge and Bethel. The race against time is on with the onset of winter close at hand.

The continued success of our schedule depends on the timely acquisition of temporary bridge parts to augment our existing stock. There has been considerable demand for these parts nationwide and although we anticipate completing these temporary installations it is not without problems as we compete with other states for a diminishing supply of what's needed to make these short-term repairs. At this point, at least a dozen of the 20 existing bridge closures are likely to be resolved using temporary bridges.

### **Winter Preparedness**

It is imperative that we turn the attention of some of our Operations forces to preparing for the winter season. We are moving forward to prepare of our workforce and fleet for winter operations. Significant snows at higher elevations are not unheard of in early October. This raises the issue of location of our Incident Command Centers and the possibility of moving those that are co-located with small district facilities. This is a particular problem in Rutland and we are seeking other quarters to move "Irene" operations in the near future.

### **Town Damage Picture**

As the extent of the damage to the State system became clearer, we at VTrans recognized the towns would need additional support to fix their roads by winter. We organized an RPC effort to provide additional assistance to the towns, assessing municipal needs, mapping areas of closure and assisting in the coordination of FEMA and FHWA ER project estimation.

The situation in the towns affected by Irene is still dire and the effort by the Regional Planning Commissions to coordinate efforts on behalf of towns is up and running. It is important that these needs are identified and met as soon as possible and the picture of the overall damage to infrastructure and the appropriate fixes is important to solutions before the winter season; not to mention the problem mentioned above concerning lack of temporary bridge stock. We must also be able to discuss fully the damage to transportation infrastructure statewide and right now the numbers for the town system are not known.

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**FHWA Emergency Relief Program (ER) – Covers highway damage on Federal-aid system**

**Description:**

- Funds repair or reconstruction of **Federal-aid highways** (excludes most town highway) which have suffered serious damage as a result of natural disasters or catastrophic failures from an external cause.
- This program supplements the commitment of resources by States to help pay for unusually heavy expenses resulting from extraordinary conditions.

**Funds Available:**

- \$100 million in annual federal authorization. This amount becomes available on October 1 and Vermont will get a share. Vermont currently has been approved for \$5 million in ER “quick release” funds.
- By law, can only provide up to \$100 million in ER funding to a State for each natural disaster or catastrophic failure that is found eligible for funding under the ER program (commonly referred to as the \$100 million per State cap).
- For a large disaster that exceeds the \$100 million per State cap, Congress may pass special legislation lifting the cap for that disaster. Vermont has already received \$5 million in ER “quick release” funds. We will also receive a portion of the \$100 million that becomes available nationally after Oct. 1, 2011.

**Federal Share:**

- Emergency repair work to restore essential travel, minimize the extent of damage, or protect the remaining facilities, accomplished in the first 180 days after the disaster occurs, may be reimbursed at 100 percent Federal share.
- For permanent work (replacing a bridge for example), ER funds are available at the pro-rata share that would normally apply to the Federal-aid facility damaged. For Interstate highways, the Federal share is 90 percent. For all other highways the Federal share is 80 percent.

**Additional Information/Issues:**

- Vermont will need Congress to approve eliminating or increasing the \$100 million cap.
- Vermont will need to ask Congress to make all costs in excess of \$100 million eligible for 100 percent Federal share.
- Vermont will also have to request Congress to extend the deadline for emergency work beyond the current 180 day limit because of the constraints that approaching Winter imposes to emergency work.
- In the past, Vermont has had to wait for more than a year for ER approved funds to be made available. This could create a significant cash flow burden while the State pays for work that we cannot yet be reimbursed for. Vermont can use FHWA annual formula money funds for ER projects if we have to wait for ER funds to be made available.

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- Vermont needs for Congress to act quickly to approve all disaster assistance funding.

**FEMA Public Assistance Program – Covers highway damage off the Federal-aid system (including most town highways)**

**Description:**

- Funds repair or reconstruction of public infrastructure (not on the Federal-aid system) which have suffered serious damage as a result of natural disasters. This includes most town highways, and also includes damage to public buildings (including state buildings), sewage treatment plants, and debris removal.

**Funds Available:**

- Funds are available as approved by FEMA.
- FEMA covers 75 percent of all approved costs. This increases to 90 percent when damage surpasses \$127 per capita, or approximately \$127 million for Vermont.
- State funds (ERAF - Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund) typically cover half the non-federal share, or 12.5%. ERAF fund is typically funded by transfers from the General Fund.
- Local funds typically cover half the non-federal share, or 12.5%. Local share is reduced to 10% if town has an approved mitigation plan ERAF (state) share increases to 15%.

**Additional Information/Issues:**

- Vermont needs for Congress to act quickly to approve all disaster assistance funding.
- Our experience is that preliminary estimates often are far less than actual costs.
- Application period for this disaster continues through end of September; total cost estimate will increase also.

**Greatest Risks:**

- 1. State cash flow risk: If federal funds are delayed, VT will be expending funds that will we not be reimbursed for until much later.**
- 2. State fund risk: VTrans will not be able to redirect FY2012 transportation funds to Irene efforts for match and costs not eligible for federal reimbursement.**
- 3. Capacity risk: VTrans lacks sufficient resources to deliver both the annual transportation program and Irene-related relief efforts.**