

Route 2 Reconstruction Planned for 2008

On August 22 Senator Patrick Leahy stopped in Danville with a group of other Vermont officials to assure us that the long promised and long planned reconstruction of Route 2 is going to take place. That's great.

The project is complicated. We are told that it is unique in the country for its marriage of safety concerns with priorities that are clearly artistic.

As Representative Steve Larrabee noted the concept of a bypass is an old one, but the notion of bypass is gone. Secretary of Transportation Neale Lunderville made clear that the traffic calming measures including islands to the east and west of the village, a narrower travel lane, treescapes and a traffic light at the intersection of the Peacham Road will reign in those 6,500 cars each day that pass through Danville. No one argues with that.

Alex Aldrich, Executive Director of the Vermont Arts Council, emphasized the importance of the artistic elements of the plan based upon participation of individuals and a design review committee that have been gnawing on artistic concepts for almost eight years. As Aldrich understands it hasn't been easy. People know what roads are, and that's one thing, but consensus about matters of artistic expression - that's another.

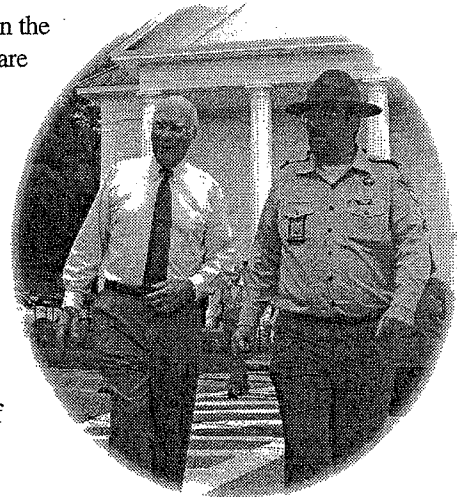
John Zwick is project director for the Vermont Arts Council, and he, too, is high on public art. He imagines the result of the project as "an expression of where Danville has come from, where it is today and where it is going in the future." Zwick says it's not like a sporting event where you can jump up and down and cheer, and at the end of the game you know who got the most points and who won. Artistic expression is connected to so much, and in Danville that means weather, communities, family, history, farms, the school and all manner of considerations about this town. It's a slippery concept, and even in the best of circumstances the production of art work leads to discussion and disagreement.

On August 22 as Senator Leahy listened, people in Danville were clearly and vigorously latching onto the concept of safety and tiptoeing around the idea of art with suspicion. People know what roads in Vermont are. But agreement about work prepared and installed by consulting artists ...

Senator Leahy is right. Vermont is not like everywhere else, and neither is Danville. We don't want the town to be the same, nor do we want Route 2, when the reconstruction is finished, to be just like someplace else. I am convinced that the traffic planners and engineers (and the folks who drive those big yellow machines) will make the village safer. That is great. And I am confident that as a result of all the wrangling in committee meetings and the discussions that have carried on long after they are over, the Green will be beautiful. It will be different, and maybe it will even be provocative and we'll talk about it.

Marion Sevigny and her late husband, Paul, were and are patrons of the Green and its appearance. As Marion, who is a member of the Danville Selectboard, said to the gathering, "I am so glad the road through the village will be safer, but the work on the Green will be the icing on the cake."

I am completely looking forward to it. I only regret that we (and those big yellow machines) have to wait until the spring of 2008 to get started.



Senator Patrick Leahy and Scoutmaster David Towle were part of the August 22 gathering to celebrate confirmation of the Route 2 reconstruction through the Village of Danville. Work is scheduled to begin in 2008.