

DRAFT MINUTES

Road Crew Regional Recruiting, Hiring & Training

Exploratory Meeting of Windham County Towns

Date	Tuesday, August 25, 2026
Location	Guilford, Vermont — in person with remote participation via Zoom
Convened by	Sheila Morse, Guilford Selectboard
Duration	Approximately 63 minutes
Status	Draft

About this document. These minutes were first drafted by Meg Staloff during the meeting, revised by Sheila Morse using an AI program, compared with the audio recording of the meeting, and then revised and formatted by the AI program, and finally reviewed by Sheila. Program descriptions, wage figures, and statutory references have been expanded and verified; action items have been separated from strategic next steps and assigned owners. Background material drawn from the pre-meeting memo rather than from discussion has been moved to Appendix A.

Because three of the five Guilford Selectboard members participated in this meeting (one opting in at the last minute) we also called this and warned a Special SB meeting. These minutes serve as the record of that meeting.

Sheila Morse

Chair, Guilford Selectboard

8.27.2026

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1. Purpose

Representatives of six Windham County towns, together with staff from regional and state support organizations, met to explore whether a shared or regional approach to recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining highway crew members would be more effective than each town working alone.

Discussion referenced the background memorandum "Regional Recruiting," prepared by Guilford Selectboard member Chip Carter and circulated the previous evening.

Sheila Morse opened by noting that crew ages across the participating towns range from the low thirties to near eighty, and that *the closer a crew skews toward eighty, the more acute the problem becomes*. She also observed that a substantial share of those present represented support organizations rather than towns — Windham Regional Commission, BDCC/SeVEDS, and the Vermont Local Roads Program — and that those organizations had signaled willingness to provide significant support once the towns determine what they actually want to do.

2. Attendance

2.1 Town representatives

Town	Representatives
Brattleboro	Oscar Heller, Selectboard Chair
Grafton	Morgan Wilbur, Town Administrator
Guilford	Sheila Morse, Chip Carter and Mike Szostak, Selectboard members; Jim Freeman, Road Foreman; Cindy Clark, resident; Verandah Porche, resident and former Selectboard Chair
Halifax	Edee Edwards, Selectboard Chair; Rhonda Ashcroft, Selectboard member
Putney	Karen Astley, Town Manager
Rockingham	Rick Cowan, Selectboard Chair

2.2 Supporting organizations

Organization	Representatives
Vermont Local Roads Program, VTrans	Todd Eaton, Branch Manager ¹
Windham Regional Commission (WRC)	Jeff Nugent; Colin Bratton

¹VTrans Training Center staff directory, listing Todd Eaton as Vermont Local Roads Branch Manager: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/training-center/staff>

Organization	Representatives
BDCC / SeVEDS	Laura Sibilia, Director of Regional Strategies; Meg Staloff, Center for a Modern Economy; Jack Spanierman

Consulted in advance but not present: Jen Stromsten (on vacation) and Chris Campany (Executive Director, WRC). Todd Eaton departed at approximately the 56-minute mark, having first volunteered for the working group.

3. Framing the Problem

Sheila Morse stated that the question before the group is whether towns might work together to build a pipeline of highway employees and applicants, train them, and then retain them. She noted that regional models already exist locally for law enforcement (coordinated by Sheriff Mark Anderson), for animal control, and potentially for salt purchasing — and asked whether an equivalent model could be constructed for highway crew development.

3.1 Two distinct models were distinguished

Laura Sibilia asked the group to separate two things that had been running together:

1. **Increasing the pool** — growing the number of trained workers available to all towns.
2. **A regional shared service** — a pool of highway workers employed jointly and moved between towns as needed.

The group settled clearly on the first. Colin Bratton articulated why the second is unlikely to work: unlike regional policing, highway work does not lend itself to shared staffing, because it is improbable that a shared crew could serve Guilford when Guilford needs it and then move to Halifax. "That's where the regional model works out well, because you're sharing a service. What you're looking at is a program that you're going to benefit from and maybe participate in."

The consensus direction, as summarized during discussion, is a system within which individual towns can hire and support apprentices directly in their own road crews, with a coordinating entity connecting training opportunities and CDL licensure.

3.2 The elements that must be resolved

Laura Sibilia set out the specific components requiring definition before any program can be designed:

1. Where does the money for coordination come from?
2. Who provides the training?
3. Who pays for the training?
4. Who pays the apprentice?
5. Who hosts the program, and where does licensure sit?

These questions structure much of what follows and remain largely open.

4. Existing Models Reviewed

Chip Carter reported the results of a national search for programs addressing the same problem. Two emerged as close matches, both of which grew out of statewide surveys of county highway commissioners, public works directors, and street superintendents responding to the same retirement wave and hiring gap Vermont now faces.

4.1 Oregon — "High School to Highway"

- **A one-year paid training program** for recent or soon-to-be high school *and alternative school* graduates, run by the Oregon Department of Transportation.²
- Launched in 2024 and successful enough that it has been continued for a second and third year, running through 2026–2027.
- **No experience required.** Trainees work as a real maintenance crew rather than in a classroom or observer role.
- **Full benefits during the trainee year** — health insurance, sick leave, and 11 paid holidays.
- **The CDL is built into the program and is not required up front.** This is the feature that distinguishes it most sharply from current Vermont municipal practice.³
- Funded through federal-aid state program funds designated for training, education, and workforce development. Federal money flows to the state, which funds the program; towns provide the hiring and the on-the-job component.

4.2 Wisconsin — Road Maintenance Technician apprenticeship

- A formal registered apprenticeship, rather than a trainee program.
- **The scope matches the town road crew job exactly** — the apprenticeship covers what municipal job descriptions already cover.
- **The apprentice obtains a CDL Class B permit within the first six months**, then completes defined certifications before finishing the program.
- Research cited in connection with both programs indicates that employees who begin as trainees or apprentices show measurably better retention than those hired already licensed.

4.3 Vermont already has the necessary machinery

Key finding. Vermont does not need new legislation to create this pathway. As Chip Carter put it: "You wouldn't be asking the legislature to build something from scratch — you would be asking an existing state agency to add one more occupation category to a system that's already running."

²Oregon Department of Transportation, High School to Highway (H2H) trainee program recruitment announcement: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDOT/bulletins/3dad5b1>

³AASHTO Journal, "Oregon DOT Continues High School Hiring Program": <https://aashtojournal.transportation.org/oregon-dot-continues-high-school-hiring-program/>

- **Act 55 of 2023** modernized Vermont's registered apprenticeship system, effective July 1, 2023.⁴ The Vermont Department of Labor is the designated State Apprenticeship Agency under 21 V.S.A. § 1113.⁵
- **The system is active and growing.** The Department reports 106 registered apprenticeship programs across 29 occupations statewide.⁶ Highway maintenance is not currently among them.
- **The State Apprenticeship Office** sits within the Department of Labor and is run by **Sharon Knight**. BDCC already has a working relationship with her through other workforce projects.⁷
- **An apprenticeship must map to an O*NET occupation code.** Jack Spanierman identified "Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers" as the nearest existing code, noting uncertainty as to whether it corresponds to Class A or Class B.
- **A person on the ground is still required.** The state can help administer an apprenticeship, but it "still would need an actual person in the community that actually administered and coordinated that."
- **A lighter-weight fallback exists.** Jack noted that a registered apprenticeship is "pretty rigid" in its administrative requirements, whereas an informal internship structure would be "easier and more flexible" — a possible interim step.

4.4 VTrans recruitment and retention work

Rick Cowan located VTrans' existing recruitment and retention programs for permanent maintenance workers and mechanics during the meeting and posted the link in chat, recommending the group learn from that work.⁸ Todd Eaton confirmed and expanded:

- VTrans runs several programs delivered within high schools.
- VTrans operates apprenticeship programs, particularly with bridge crews and within the area maintenance garages.
- Todd Eaton sits on the VTrans Talent Acquisition and Retention Committee, which does this planning and builds new programs for VTrans employees.

4.5 BDCC's current CDL pipeline work

Jack Spanierman summarized what BDCC already operates:

- BDCC has run several cohorts working directly with high school students — principally juniors and seniors with an interest in CDL careers.

⁴Vermont Department of Labor, Act 55 of 2023 (expanding apprenticeship and other workforce opportunities), effective July 1, 2023: <https://labor.vermont.gov/apprenticeship/act55>

⁵21 V.S.A. § 1113, Vermont Registered Apprenticeship Program: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/21/013/01113>

⁶Vermont Registered Apprenticeship Program Annual Report (2025), reporting 106 active programs across 29 occupations: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/2025-Registered-Apprenticeship-Program-Annual-Report.pdf>

⁷Vermont Department of Labor, Registered Apprenticeship Program: <https://labor.vermont.gov/workforce-development/apprenticeship>

⁸VTrans recruitment and retention: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/aot-recruitment>

- The curriculum is roughly a one-week intensive covering CDL basics, the types of jobs available, training pathways, and available funding.
- **It feeds a small but functioning pipeline:** graduates of the BDCC program enroll directly in formal CDL training at Northeast Driver Training in Rockingham.⁹
- **It does not currently serve career-changing adults.** Jack expected a similar model would work for adults, "but that has yet to be seen."

4.6 Vermont Local Roads new employee onboarding program

Todd Eaton described a training program he built three years ago and which is available to towns now. This corrects a description in the previous draft: the 40 hours is the content of Todd's onboarding program, not a requirement imposed by a Local Roads guidebook.

- **40 hours of training** constituting a complete new employee onboarding program.
- **On completion the employee holds all OSHA-required safety training** for any job operation a municipality would perform.
- **Finishes with MSHA certification and flagger certification.**
- Todd: "my program would be able to carry that burden." What remains with the town is the hands-on, on-the-job portion — "this is how we do it."
- **Origin:** in 2020 the Federal Highway Administration created a mandate requiring entry-level driver training before a candidate may take the CDL test.¹⁰ Todd has since been helping municipalities train their own CDL drivers, and a program already exists built specifically to hand off to towns for internal use.

5. Structural Constraints on a Regional Model

Todd Eaton set out the practical obstacles early, and they framed much of the subsequent discussion:

- **Vermont lacks the governmental layer these models rely on.** The Oregon and Wisconsin programs appear to be administered at county level. "We don't have that government structure in Vermont."
- **The regional planning commissions are already strapped** as organizations and are not obviously able to absorb the coordinating role.
- **Administration and funding are therefore "the two big hurdles"** — "which is usually our problem when we do any of these things."

Edee Edwards pressed the same point later: aside from BDCC and, less naturally, the Windham Regional Commission, no obvious candidate host exists. "Let's say you and I and Karen decide to get together and say we need to coordinate infrastructure. I have no idea where we would start."

⁹Northeast Driver Training LLC, commercial driving school, Rockingham / Bellows Falls, VT:
<https://northeastdrivertraining.com/>

¹⁰Federal Highway Administration, workforce development policy, guidance and regulations:
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovativeprograms/centers/workforce_dev/policy_guidance_regulations.aspx

There is no Mark Anderson of highways. The regional policing model worked because an officeholder existed at county level with authority and region-wide knowledge. The group identified no equivalent position in town government, among road foremen, or at the state level — and noted this is the single largest gap between the idea and its execution.

6. Barriers to Entry and Crew Capacity

6.1 The CDL question

Rick Cowan raised what became one of the meeting's central questions: is the CDL itself the barrier? Observing his own crew, he noted that some members spend much of their time on work that does not involve driving. "If we could get people on board doing the other kinds of jobs, and then once they're aware of what it's like, then they can approach the CDL. But the CDL barrier seems to be such a limiting factor for our recruitment."

- CDL Class A covers heavier combinations, principally tractor-trailer. Class B is typically what a municipality requires. The distinction is gross vehicle weight.
- The cost of obtaining a Class B CDL is \$3,500 to \$5,000, varying by school — "at least."
- Evidence from Oregon and Wisconsin, and Todd Eaton's own experience, points the same way: starting someone in the department while they pursue the license produces materially better retention than hiring only fully licensed candidates.

6.2 Crew size constrains what is possible

The counter-argument is capacity. On a small crew, carrying someone who cannot yet drive may simply not be workable — in winter everyone must drive, and there is no slack for training. In off season, smaller towns may have few tasks that don't require the use of equipment.

Town	Crew size	Detail reported
Brattleboro	15 full-time	Plus three summer interns; described as working well at that scale — "unlimited lawns to mow, things to paint"
Guilford	4 including the foreman	"I have me and three other guys. I'm not really that size enough to utilize that"
Putney	5	Three expected to retire within five years; one crew member is 79 and will not renew his CDL in March
Region-wide	Typically 3–5	Crew ages range from the low thirties to near eighty

Putney's March CDL non-renewal is the nearest firm deadline identified in the meeting. Related concern: keeping a non-CDL hire productively occupied through a full year is a persistent problem

for small towns — *a crew of three has neither the work volume nor the supervisory time to absorb a trainee the way Brattleboro can.*

6.3 Town experience with in-house training

- **Putney** trains its own hires, through its highway superintendent. **Westminster** does so as well (Karen Astley).
- **Halifax** has offered to train people and covered the cost, but subsequently lost the employees to larger towns (Rhonda Ashcroft). The cost was borne; the employee was still lost to another municipality.
- **Karen Astley suggested targeting adults aged roughly 26 to 30** rather than concentrating on high school graduates: "high school is great, but once they graduate, they're trying to figure out what they actually really want to do." Retention is expected to be stronger in the older group.

6.4 Municipal hiring policy as a lever

Guilford action item identified in the meeting. Chip Carter stated that current Guilford policy requires an applicant to hold a CDL in order to apply at all: "Currently my filter says nobody without a CDL can come here." Todd Eaton recommended on the record that Guilford change that policy so the town can train its own drivers, because in-house training produces "much, much better retention rates," and noted that a program already exists built to hand off to towns for exactly that purpose.

Chip accepted the competitive point he had not previously weighed: recruiting candidates who already hold a CDL places a small town in direct competition with private industry for the same scarce individuals — competition it is unlikely to win. "I have to say we do lose to private industry. I didn't see that angle when I spoke."

Todd Eaton's broader observation: municipalities struggle to compete with private employers not only on pay but on work-life balance, particularly through the winter season, and younger workers are motivated more by the headline wage than by the benefits package.

General principle: each town should review what its current hiring policy actually permits, and whether it allows apprentices or in-house driver training at all.

7. Wages, Costs, and Comparative Data

Participants agreed the group needs solid wage data including private-sector figures, since private employers compete directly for the same candidates. Karen Astley pressed this point specifically: "If we're going to be looking at data, are we going to collect data from the private sector? Because that could be a game changer."

7.1 Figures reported

*All wage figures below were reported by Jack Spanierman from O*NET occupational data.¹¹ Jack initially estimated "high \$20s," then corrected himself with the sourced figures during the meeting.*

Item	Figure
Vermont average hourly wage, CDL-A holders	\$29.25 per hour
United States average, CDL-A holders	\$28.19 per hour
Southern Vermont average	\$28.07 per hour
90th percentile earnings	Mid to upper \$30s per hour
Cost to obtain a Class B CDL	\$3,500 – \$5,000, varying by school

Jack's caveat should be preserved: the averages do not mean everyone is earning that figure. The relevant comparison for recruitment purposes is not the average but what a competing private employer will offer a specific candidate.

7.2 Data sources identified

- **VLCT Compensation and Benefits Survey** — the 2025 edition is the most recent.¹² Edee Edwards confirmed it provides the number of positions and individual wage rates per employee, not merely aggregated averages. Access requires logging in as a member town.
- **It does not cover the benefits differential.** A separate benefits survey was carried out a few years ago by Tristan Roberts; that is the existing source for benefits comparison.
- **Guilford's Highway Wage Comparison** — Chip Carter prepared this for all towns in Windham County, but only the Guilford-only version could be located in the files during the meeting. Chip is to find and circulate the county-wide version.
- **State highway worker wages** — Edee Edwards proposed finding out what regional VTrans employees earn, as a further comparison group.
- **Private-sector wage data** — still to be collected; no source or owner identified.

7.3 Survey fatigue is a real constraint

Constraint on data gathering. Sheila Morse asked towns for position, wage, and vacancy data some weeks ago and received responses from only five towns. Edee Edwards was direct about why: "Answering a second survey of that nature would kill us." Any data-collection plan must work from existing sources — principally the VLCT survey — rather than issuing a new questionnaire to town offices.

¹¹Figures as reported in the meeting from O*NET occupational wage data. O*NET OnLine: <https://www.onetonline.org/>

¹²VLCT 2025 Compensation and Benefits Survey results dashboard (member login required): <https://www.vlct.org/resource/2025-vlct-compensation-and-benefits-survey-results-dashboard>

7.4 Benefits — a split within the workforce

Sheila Morse described a divide visible within Guilford's own employees. Guilford's benefits apply equally to town office staff and road crew.

- **Town office employees value the benefits highly** and "would not let go of any benefits whatsoever."
- **Younger road crew members want higher wages** because the difference is visible week to week. "They forget about what's going to happen if their kid needs surgery, or if their partner goes into the hospital."
- **Guilford pays 100% of a platinum health plan.** Other towns ask their road crews to contribute. Affordability is "always a big point of contention every year — can we keep affording that healthcare cost?"
- Guilford raised wages this year, as it almost always does annually.

Conclusion drawn: benefits matter, but benefits alone do not attract younger workers the way wages do. Jeff Nugent added the budget consequence — selectboards should expect highway budgets rising by something like 20% to cover salt, sand, and wages high enough to compete with commercial truck drivers "who just have a nine-to-five job."

8. Retention, Morale, and Working Conditions

Colin Bratton reframed the discussion, arguing that the group was concentrating on hiring while a parallel and equally serious problem was going unexamined.

8.1 The diagnostic contrast

Guilford	Elsewhere in the region
The previous road foreman started as a summer employee in 1974 and stayed until 2024 — fifty years with the town.	In several Windsor County towns, entire road crews have quit. One town in the Windham region has cycled through two road foremen in roughly six months.

The departures were attributed to harassment perceived from town residents or selectboard members, combined with a lack of support from the town office. Colin's question: "Why is Guilford able to keep a foreman for fifty years where some other towns are just cycling through one every six months?"

- The way towns operate genuinely differs — governance, selectboard conduct, and the support crews receive from town office staff all vary.
- "Most road guys don't want to do paperwork." In some towns office staff are very supportive; in others crews must do everything themselves. Colin considered this a substantial retention factor.
- **The reframe:** not only "why can't you hire new staff," but "why are your existing staff leaving?"

- **This requires no new program.** "It doesn't require a big huge program to implement. It's a conversation, and it's learning from other towns, and it's trying to do things differently and do things better."

Colin proposed convening road crew members, foremen, and highway superintendents together with town officials to determine whether the problems are governance-related or stem from a lack of administrative support.

8.2 The work itself has changed

Verandah Porche reported on interviews conducted with highway department members, and Jim Freeman, Guilford Road Foreman, confirmed and expanded the account.

- **Rain now occurs in any month of the year.** Last year it began in November and continued through March. "November, December, January, February, March, we can have rainstorms." Previously one or two ice events a spring were expected.
- **Storm frequency has risen** from one or two a week to sometimes three or four.
- **During rain events the crew sands every 90 minutes** — "you'd never go home" — and by the following morning there is another inch and a half of snow. Under the old pattern, cold snow could be plowed off and the crew went home.
- **Work is often obliterated as soon as it is done:** "you do the work, and by the time you get down the icy road, your work has already been obliterated by the rain."
- **Safety and equipment concerns were raised directly** — crew members spoke about the risk of sliding off the road, and about walkie-talkies not working.
- **Crews are on call every night and out four nights a week** at the height of the season. Jim Freeman: two Thanksgivings running the crew ate turkey on the Friday, and they worked the first four holidays of the past year. "I didn't want to call those guys in, but I had to."

Verandah noted this is not a problem that can be solved from a desk in the town office, but that from listening to crew members it is clearly a factor in retention.

8.3 What support looks like in practice

Jeff Nugent gave a readout of the August 6th Road Foremen's gathering. Discussion there covered younger workers' preference for salary over benefits, and — substantially — the lack of selectboard support for highway crews in some towns when residents complain. Job satisfaction was identified as a major factor.

- **WRC's natural role:** Jeff observed that convening road foremen and selectboard members is "a bit more in our wheelhouse than training programs and internships."
- "Selectboard members can't control the winter rainstorms, but they can be understanding of it" — and can understand why the highway budget is rising.
- **Guilford's counter-example.** Jim Freeman reported excellent support from the Guilford Selectboard and town. Complaints are not a problem: "talk to him for ten minutes and most of them are fine." What matters most to his crew is the citizen who pulls over and, instead of complaining, says thanks: "for my guys, that goes a long way, as opposed to a lack of support."

- **Visibility as a mechanism.** Sheila Morse noted that every Guilford Selectboard meeting includes a highway update, so the foreman or his substitute is present and available for questions. At town meeting, residents stand and applaud the highway crew when the highway budget comes up.

9. Subcontracting and Informal Capacity

Karen Astley asked whether any town subcontracts any part of its highway work, or has considered it.

- **In southern Vermont, only Brookline** subcontracts a substantial part of its highway work, and that is because the town is particularly small. Otherwise, there is project-specific subcontracting here and there, but no substantial portion of regular maintenance is contracted out.
- **New Hampshire and Massachusetts** both subcontract a significant amount of winter plowing.

9.1 The New Hampshire evidence

Read from Chip Carter's memorandum during the meeting:

- New Hampshire has publicly reported a shortage of CDL drivers for its own plow trucks.
- **In one recent February the state rented 268 private plow trucks when it needed 367** to cover all its plow beats.
- **Contractors now make up more than half the state's plowing force.**
- The state raised contractor rates by 15% and warned that roads may take longer to clear after large storms.
- The department states plainly that it competes with private construction firms — and with municipalities — for the same drivers and operators.

The case for regional cooperation, as stated in the memorandum:

"That is our situation in miniature. Guilford, Grafton, Brattleboro, Halifax, VTrans and every paving contractor in the valley are fishing in one small pond. Regional cooperation partly means agreeing to grow the pond rather than poach from each other."

9.2 Informal and seasonal capacity

- **Halifax maintains an informal applicant pool** — "a mental list at least" of residents holding CDLs who can be called on during emergencies. Edee Edwards suggested these people are worth approaching directly about a career change, and that other towns likely have similar informal lists.
- **Seasonal hiring.** Edee asked whether any town hires seasonal-only staff. She has seen it in the VLCT report but doubts anyone in the region does it. Her concern is the winter: "it's not safe for people to be on the road as many hours as they have to be."

- **Early-pipeline awareness.** Verandah Porche proposed "touch a truck" events for young children as the earliest end of the pipeline. Sheila Morse added that beyond that, the group needs to think seriously about high school and career center programs.

10. Funding Pathways

10.1 A near-term opportunity

Live funding lead. Laura Sibilia reported that the legislature has appropriated funding for technical assistance and municipal capacity building, to be administered by the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD). A defined project with stated goals and a pathway to achieving them could potentially secure a small amount of study or seed money — "seed money to plan the plan."

Conditions: the funding will be competitive, the total available is not large, and VCRD has not yet finalized how the program will work. Laura's requirement is unambiguous: "you have to have a clear idea of what you're trying to achieve — what is our deliverable going to be at the end of this."

This is distinct from the regional priority project process. It is a state-level funding program for developing systems and providing technical assistance to support municipal capacity. The group should watch for details and be ready with a defined deliverable.

10.2 Other funding elements to resolve

- Federal or state money routed through a state program, on the Oregon model. Sheila Morse is to trace where the equivalent federal funds currently go in Vermont.
- Towns investing directly in a trainee position — budgeting for it as an investment in a future crew member rather than a current employee. The constraint is real: towns have very little leeway in that sort of funding.
- Who pays the apprentice remains unresolved and is separate from who pays for the training.

10.3 Approaching the legislature

The group was advised clearly against going to the legislature with a problem rather than a proposal.

- **Laura Sibilia:** "I don't think you want to ask the legislature to solve your problem. You have a lot more expertise here in this room about the nature of your problem." Define the problem and the solution first, then go.
- **Todd Eaton has already testified.** He appeared before several legislative committees over the winter, and this exact question — what towns need for retention and staffing — was one of the principal questions he had to field.

- **There is appetite.** "I think there's already an appetite within the legislature that we might be able to find some funding through that" — but a model or at least a worked theory must be brought forward.
- **Legislators are not the experts.** "They're going to be asking me, they're going to be asking BDCC and VLCT: what should we do? How do we fix this?" The group is better placed to answer than to ask.

11. Core Unresolved Issues

Sheila Morse summarized the outstanding problems as the meeting drew toward next steps:

1. **No coordinating host exists** to create and hold a pool of applicants. Edee Edwards judged this the most tractable of the open questions, precisely because the field of candidate organizations is small: "by getting that piece out of the way might be a good first and next step."
2. **Funding is unsettled** — federal or state money, or towns investing in a trainee position, with little municipal budget leeway either way.
3. **Positions need visibility and better marketing.** People need to understand what road crew work actually is. Sheila offered the comparison: working on the road for 32 weeks of the year compares favorably with crawling through an attic installing insulation in 96-degree heat — "and then we have 16 weeks where it's awful. So how do we talk about that?"
4. **If a pool is created, how do towns access it?** What support does a town provide to make the hire, and then to support and retain the new hire?
5. **Statement of needs not yet coalesced.** The papers written and circulated amount to a good understanding of needs, but have not been reduced to a specific statement with goals and a pathway.

12. Next Steps

Agreed strategic direction:

- **Solidify a project lead to hold the project.** This remains the pivotal unresolved question.
- **Define a scope and deliverable,** with goals and milestones — both because the work requires it and because competitive funding will demand it.
- **BDCC will support the conversations** and connect the group to the Vermont Department of Labor. DOL can assist with structuring an apprenticeship and creating the occupation code, but requires a person on the ground in the community to coordinate.
- **Continue hearing from road crews,** and invite selectboard members to road foremen gatherings. WRC may be able to convene meetings between selectboards and road crews.
- **Craft a solution to bring to the legislature.** Legislators know the problem exists; it needs to be packaged as a solution.

- **Broaden participation beyond the towns present.** Edee Edwards: "I want to make sure that we're not the only five towns represented here. Let's spread the word."

13. Action Items

The following were assigned or accepted during the meeting.

#	Action	Owner
1	Send Sheila the name of the federal program funding the Oregon apprenticeship, so she can trace where that money currently goes in Vermont	Laura Sibilia
2	Locate and circulate the Windham County-wide highway wage comparison (only the Guilford-only version is in the files)	Chip Carter
3	Circulate these minutes together with all reference links	Sheila Morse
4	Draft an outreach message explaining exactly what the ask is, for WRC to distribute to as many towns and town officials as possible	Sheila Morse drafts; Colin Bratton distributes via WRC
5	Set the next meeting as promptly as possible to preserve momentum	Sheila Morse
6	Invite an additional road crew foreman to join the working group	Jim Freeman
7	Explore a joint session between the working group and the road foremen's gathering	Colin Bratton / WRC
8	Contact VTrans to learn from its existing recruitment and retention work	Unassigned — proposed by Rick Cowan
9	Collect private-sector wage data for comparison	Unassigned — proposed by Karen Astley
10	Obtain wage data for regional state highway workers	Unassigned — proposed by Edee Edwards
11	Review and consider amending Guilford's hiring policy to remove the CDL-to-apply requirement	Guilford Selectboard
12	Each participating town to review what its own hiring policy permits regarding apprentices and in-house driver training	All towns
13	Monitor the VCRD-administered technical assistance funding and be ready with a defined deliverable	Laura Sibilia / BDCC

14. Working Group

Sheila Morse asked for volunteers to assemble the next steps and work out what a solution looks like. Those who volunteered during the meeting:

Member	Role or contribution
Sheila Morse	Guilford Selectboard — convener
Chip Carter	Guilford Selectboard — research and background papers
Verandah Porche	Guilford — crew interviews and working conditions
Todd Eaton	Vermont Local Roads, VTTrans — training delivery and state-level connections
Edee Edwards	Halifax Selectboard
Laura Sibilia and Meg Staloff	BDCC / SeVEDS — technical assistance, funding intelligence, and DOL connections
Jeff Nugent	Windham Regional Commission — convening foremen and selectboards
Road crew foreman	To be determined — Jim Freeman to approach a colleague

Chip Carter noted that he, Sheila Morse, and Jim Freeman have been working on this issue for approximately fourteen months. Jeff Nugent volunteered explicitly: "I've got a role myself, but it'll be fun working on this."

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned after approximately 63 minutes, with Edee Edwards requesting that another meeting be scheduled as quickly as possible to maintain momentum. No date was set.

Appendix A — Background from the Regional Recruiting Memorandum

Note on this appendix. The material below is drawn from Chip Carter's "Regional Recruiting" memorandum, which was circulated in advance and referenced during the meeting. It is retained here because it states the problem well, but it is presented as background rather than as a record of discussion. Some of it — in particular the drug testing point and the \$25–\$27 wage figure — was not discussed at the meeting itself.

A.1 The structural problem

Our highway crews are aging, few people are applying, and the job description itself screens out the people we most want. The typical Vermont road crew posting requires a Class B CDL and a year of experience up front, at \$25 to \$27 an hour. An 18-year-old coming out of high school or the career centre meets neither requirement, so the posting never reaches them.

Guilford provides an exceptional benefit program — including health, vision and dental insurance and retirement benefits — and approved a generous wage increase, so the destination job is now worth reaching. What is missing is the on-ramp: a defined way for a young person with no CDL and no experience to become a fully qualified crew member in one to two years, and a reason to stay once they get there.

A.2 Additional barriers noted in the memorandum

- Most towns have multiple road crew members nearing retirement age.
- Lack of town and selectboard support for highway crews in some towns.
- The demands of the winter season.
- The importance of higher wages, set against younger workers' relative disregard for benefit packages.
- **Random drug testing** — a federal requirement for CDL holders, and described in the memorandum as the elephant in the room. *(This point raised post-meeting among a 3-5 folks who lingered, all of whom acknowledged it as a significant issue.)*

Appendix B — Reference Links

Source	Link
Oregon DOT High School to Highway program	aashtojournal.transportation.org/oregon-dot-continues-high-school-hiring-program
ODOT H2H recruitment announcement	content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ORDOT/bulletins/3dad5b1

Source	Link
Vermont Act 55 of 2023 — apprenticeship modernization	labor.vermont.gov/apprenticeship/act55
21 V.S.A. § 1113 — Vermont Registered Apprenticeship Program	legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/21/013/01113
Vermont DOL Registered Apprenticeship program	labor.vermont.gov/workforce-development/apprenticeship
Vermont Registered Apprenticeship annual report (2025)	legislature.vermont.gov — 2025 Registered Apprenticeship Program Annual Report
Vermont Apprenticeship Advisory Board	labor.vermont.gov/apprenticeship-advisory-board
VTrans recruitment and retention	vtrans.vermont.gov/aot-recruitment
VTrans Training Center / Vermont Local Roads staff	vtrans.vermont.gov/training-center/staff
FHWA workforce development policy and guidance	fhwa.dot.gov — workforce development policy, guidance and regulations
VLCT 2025 Compensation and Benefits Survey dashboard	vlct.org/resource/2025-vlct-compensation-and-benefits-survey-results-dashboard
Northeast Driver Training, Rockingham VT	northeastdrivertraining.com

These are draft minutes and have not been approved. Meg Staloff's draft compared with the audio recording of the meeting on August 27, 2026.