

# Omya Community Issue Team – Trucks and Transportation

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## September 6, 2007 Meeting Summary

**Location:** Maclure Library, Pittsford, VT

**Date:** September 6, 2007

**Time:** 6:30 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

### **Meeting Attendees** (in alphabetical order):

Aric Farrar – Verpol Logistics Manager, Omya

John Keith – Keith’s Country Store

Andy McIntosh – Geologist, Omya

Linda Poro - Resident

Lynn Silloway - Resident

Dave Thayer – CLF Ventures

*Absent:* Shawn Erickson – Foreman, Town of Pittsford Highway Department

### **I. Welcome and Introductions**

Issue Team co-facilitators Aric Farrar (Verpol Logistics Manager) and Andy McIntosh (Geologist) welcomed the Team and introduced the newest participant to join, John Keith of Keith’s Country Store.

### **II. Old Business**

#### Membership:

Team members were asked whether the Team had the appropriate number and mix of participants. The team generally agreed that more members might be good but that they were comfortable with the current membership. Lynn Silloway reported that she asked Dorothy Parker about being on the team but that Ms. Parker would not be able to participate. Andy indicated that other local residents were welcome to participate, so long as the rest of the members were in agreement beforehand.

#### Review of Last Meeting and Action Items:

Aric Farrar gave a summary of the first meeting and explained the four action items he and Andy McIntosh were tasked with at that meeting. They were:

- 1) Omya’s Truck speeding policy and procedure
- 2) Emergency services at blocked railroad crossings
- 3) Installation of railroad crossing guards
- 4) Omya’s roadwashing policy and procedure

#### Approval of the Notes from Meeting 1:

The group agreed that the notes from the first meeting were accurate and accepted them as presented. However, Shawn Erickson was not in attendance and the Team debated what to do about approving the notes in this case. It was decided that Aric or Andy would check with Shawn Erickson to make sure he has a chance to submit revisions, and assuming Mr. Erickson has no edits, the notes will be treated as final. At that point, they will be posted at [www.omyainvermont.net](http://www.omyainvermont.net).

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#### III. Report on Action Items

The action items from the first Trucks and Transportation Meeting stemmed from four questions:

- 1) What are Omya's current practices to address truck speeding? What are Omya's ideas for addressing truck speed in the future?
- 2) What do emergency vehicles do if the road is blocked at a railroad crossing?
- 3) What is the process for adding railroad crossing gates?
- 4) How does Omya decide when to wash local roads? How often does this washing take place?

Aric and Andy reported to the team what they gathered to answer each of these questions. The one-page handouts appear in the appendix of these notes.

#### Speeding:

Aric and Andy reported the truck carriers' policies on speed violations and explained the discussions they had with fleet managers. One team member reported witnessing a significant drop in truck speeding following the first meeting and attributed the improvement – although temporary – to Aric and Andy's outreach to carriers at that time. The team discussed whether speeding was a problem at a specific time (or times) of the day, but agreed that it could be a problem at any time of the day. At least one team member felt as though law enforcement hardly ever patrolled the truck route. The question was asked whether the new police cruiser from Pittsford could be posted along the truck route more often. There was also a question as to whether the speed limit should be 25 mph all along the route. The team agreed that gathering data on speeding would be an important first step to solving the problem.

Other ideas to address speeding that were discussed:

- Deploy a speed cart in trouble areas. Use data to identify problem areas and times. Provide information to law enforcement. Ticket speeders, if possible.
- Make the speed limit 25 mph all along the truck route (Shawn stated he did not think this was a viable idea).
- Post a "You're entering a residential area. Please drive safely" sign where trucks exit Omya's property and/ or where trucks enter Florence village.
- Provide a reminder to truck drivers about driving responsibly on their "carrier fax" document.
- Ask carriers to implement a voluntary "recommended speed" limit policy such as Dido and L.F. Carter do in the Brandon area (encouraging drivers to drive under the speed limit).

#### Railroad Crossings:

Team members were relieved to hear that emergency services and the railroad company coordinate to avoid stopped trains from delaying first responders, a piece of information Aric and Andy were able to pull together through research and professional and personal contacts. Team members were satisfied with the information provided. The one remaining question was regarding the rule on train horns at railroad crossings: Must trains blow their horns at every crossing? How close must they be to the crossing when doing so?

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#### Road Washing:

Team members felt that despite Omya's efforts to wash roads frequently, there are several trouble spots where dust tracking remains a problem and debris continues to build up. One area identified by the team was at the turn near the railroad trestle, where aggregate or other debris accumulates. One team member asked why the list of routine wash areas did not include West Creek road from the railroad trestle to Kendall Hill. This member felt as though this had previously been washed and that it remained a problem spot.

#### **IV. Next Steps**

##### Existing Issues -

Andy and Aric were asked to follow up on a few questions related to existing concerns of truck speeding, road washing and railroad crossings.

##### *Speeding*

- How will Omya implement and use the speed cart? Will it serve simply as a deterrent or will it collect data, too? Can tickets be issued to speeders caught by the cart? How can Omya work with law enforcement on this? What type of approval does Omya need from the town or other authorities?

##### *Railroad Crossings*

- Must trains blow their horns at every crossing? How close must they be to the crossing when doing so?

##### *Road Washing*

- Why is West Creek road not being washed from the railroad trestle to Kendall Hill road? Was it ever part of the routine wash list? If so, why did it come off that list? Might it be added to the list again?

##### New Issues -

Two specific new issues were raised at the meeting for Andy and Aric to look into and provide the team with more information:

##### *Truck Route Signs*

- What was the impetus for installing new signs along the truck route? What was the (or was there any) process by which Omya got new signs installed? Why were neighbors not consulted in the process? Is this process the same for every business?

##### *Kendall Hill Road Bridge*

- What is the status of and repair plans for the bridge? Is there a contingency plan if the bridge has to be closed? Who paid for the bridge in the first place? Who will pay for the repairs or replacement?

#### **V. Housekeeping**

It was proposed that the next Trucks and Transportation Team Meeting take place on Thursday, December 6, 2007 from 6 – 8 PM at the Maclure Library.

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## APPENDIX: ACTION ITEM REPORT

### #1 - Omya's Current Practices and Ideas to Address Truck Speeds in the Future

#### Omya's Current Practices

- Omya believes in a safe working environment, both on its property and is aware that the Verpol plant is located in a rural neighborhood with narrow winding access roads and that speeding trucks are a threat to safety.
- Omya promotes safe driving around the Verpol plant by:
  - Posting speed limits within the plant facility.
  - Periodically reminding individual truck operators to follow posted speed limits and to respect the surrounding community when traveling through the area.
    - Dido and L.F. Carter - zero tolerance policy on speeding convictions
    - Swift, Quality Carriers and Glenn Tay – 2 strikes on speeding convictions
  - Communicating concerns of local speeding and safe driving practices with its carrier contractors.
  - Contacting individual carrier contractors and customers about specific drivers for which there have been complaints.
  - Omya has considered the purchase of a “speed cart” (automatically flashes speed as trucks go past).
- Omya maintains a Community Feedback Line – a dedicated phone line for community members to register their concerns or suggestions regarding operations – and welcomes input regarding the safety of contract carriers and other Omya related trucks that use local roads. The following is Omya's Feedback Line procedure:
  - Phone line and web site are checked twice daily. All comments are stored in the Community Feedback Line database.
  - The Verpol Plant Manager and Plant Environmental Manager are notified of feedback. They review submission and determine course of action. If further information is necessary, the community member is contacted to clarify issue.
  - The appropriate department head is notified and investigates issue raised in submission. In cases regarding speeding, Plant Logistics and Shipping Departments investigate.
  - Once issue is investigated, report made to Plant Manager and/or Plant Environmental Manager.
  - Plant Manager or Plant Environmental Manager contact community member to report on issue and discuss situation within 24 hours of submission.

#### Ideas for Omya to Address Speeding Issue

- Post signs in truck operator break room encouraging drivers to help Omya be a good neighbor by driving slowly and carefully in the surrounding neighborhood.
- Post reminders to drive the speed limit at Verpol plant and quarries exits. E.g. *“Please Slow Down! Omya asks you to help us be a good neighbor.”*
- An enhanced communication program with transportation companies and sub-contractors that stresses slow, safe driving the neighborhood surrounding the plant.
  - Dido and L.F. Carter's Brandon area speed recommendation efforts
- Consider fleet driving record when renewing contracts with carriers.
- Deploy speed carts to discourage speeding

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- Requires coordination with town, county and/ or state law enforcement agencies.
- Collect data on truck speeds at specific locations
  - Deployment requires coordination with town, county and/ or state law enforcement agencies.
- Investigate other “traffic calming” measures
  - Deployment requires coordination with town, county and/ or state law enforcement agencies.

### #2 - *What do emergency vehicles do if the road is blocked at a railroad crossing?*

#### **Federal Regulations**

There are no Federal regulations regarding blocked railroad crossings; however, the Federal Railroad Administration regulations do prohibit standing trains, locomotives, or other rail equipment from activating a warning system (e.g. bells) at grade crossings unless “...the operations are part of normal train or switching movements.”

#### **State Regulations**

Vermont prohibits trains from blocking crossings for more than 5 minutes at a time at a highway (public road), or a road required for private or farm use. [Vt. Stat. Ann. Title 5 Ch. 68 Sec. §3587 (1999)] Violators of Section 3587 may be fined between \$5 - \$50.

#### **What happens in practice?**

Representatives from the Railroad Company and local emergency services were contacted to better understand what procedures are in place to avoid blocked crossings from hindering emergency personnel:

*Brent Brewer – General Manager, Vermont Railway, Inc.:*

Mr. Brewer indicated that it is Vermont Railway’s normal practice to make way for emergency vehicles as long as it is safe for train operators to do so. While there is no specific rule requiring the company to clear crossings for emergency vehicles, it is the railroad’s normal practice to do so.

*Lieutenant Donald Patch – Rutland Station Commander, Vermont State Police:*

Lt. Patch stated that the State Police and railroad companies coordinate in cases of emergency. Police cruisers carry the railroad frequency on their radios to stay in touch. In addition, rail-related safety courses are available to officers. Lt. Patch recollected only a few instances in which such communication was required, and that in these cases, it was the police contacting the railroad company as a result of automobile-only accidents blocking the tracks.

*Chief Robert Schlacter – Fire Chief, City of Rutland Fire Department:*

Chief Schlacter commands the City of Rutland Fire Department and is also a member of the Local Emergency Planning Committee that serves the Pittsford and Florence area. Chief Schlacter stated that coordination between emergency services and railroad operators takes place as needed, although no formal program was in place. Chief Schlacter pointed out that the fire departments always have an alternative route in case of access being blocked on the primary route.

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#### ***#3 - What is the process for adding railroad crossing gates?***

##### **Federal Crossing Guidance**

There are no federal regulations regarding the installation of safety equipment at crossings; but there is federal guidance to assist states in developing the rules. Federal Highway Administration policy (23 CFR 924) indicates that each state shall come up with an individual plan for the safe regulation of activities related to highways through a highway safety improvement program.

##### **Vermont Crossing Policy**

The Vermont Transportation Board has jurisdiction over all decisions related to railroad crossings. The Board is responsible for ensuring that rail systems are operated and maintained in accordance with state laws. This includes decision-making authority over warning devices for grade crossings. The Board does not use specific standards to guide these decisions and makes each decision on the basis of the specific facts for the individual location.

Town select boards and the state agency of transportation are responsible for local and state roads respectively, and may petition the Transportation Board to add safety measures at railroad crossings. As an alternative, three residents of a town can make a request in writing to the Transportation Board to erect crossing gates or other automatic electronic crossing signals. The Board must notify all parties and then visit the crossing. If the Board determines a gate is needed, it will notify the appropriate railroad corporation that it must construct the signal. Regardless of which group initiates a railroad crossing petition, the Transportation Board has the final say, and will consider public safety as the primary basis for its decision.

Trains must make audible warnings when approaching and moving through grade crossings. Audible warning may be prohibited at some crossings so long as other acceptable warning devices are used. Other acceptable warning devices include:

- Automatically activated flashing lights in both directions
- Automatically lowered gates that block the track in both directions
- Automatically activated bell
- Streetlights
- Posted signs before the crossing in each direction

The agency of transportation may recommend that the Transportation Board exempt certain grade crossings from constructing or posting any active or passive crossing signals. However under these circumstances, the railroad corporation must arrange for a person to stand at the exempt crossing with a flag while trains are passing.

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#### ***#4 - How does Omya decide when to wash local roads? How often does this washing take place?***

##### **Omya Environmental Dust Suppression Policy**

This policy outlines the process used to initiate and implement road washing activities at the Florence site for the purposes of dust suppression.

##### *Road Washing Procedure:*

The Verpol Plant Maintenance Department and the Environmental Manager are responsible for coordination with the road washing subcontractor and assurance of the effectiveness of the dust suppression activities.

Step #1 – Road washing subcontractor is instructed by contract, at a minimum, to perform daily washing of the following areas when temperatures are above freezing:

- A. Verpol Plant main entrance
- B. Onsite ore truck haul route
- C. Whipple Hollow road to train trestle at intersection with West Creek road
- D. Hogback Quarry truck haul road

Step #2 – Daily morning inspections are conducted by the Verpol Plant Maintenance Department and/or the Environmental Manager to evaluate effectiveness and completeness of previous days routine dust suppression activities (areas denoted in Step #1).

The inspection includes visual assessments of the following non-routinely washed roadway areas:

- A. Verpol Plant shipping parking lot
- B. Verpol Plant main parking lot
- C. Verpol Plant east employee access road
- D. Tailings management area unpaved haul roads
- E. Onsite unpaved roads and parking areas

Step #3 – Based on daily morning inspections, the Verpol Plant Maintenance Department and/or the Environmental Manager will contact the road washing subcontractor to request additional dust suppression activities or, if necessary, sweeping at routine or non-routine areas.

Step #4 – Daily morning inspections are documented by the Verpol Plant Maintenance Department and/or the Environmental Manager and kept on file at the Plant main offices. Daily dust suppression activities are documented by the subcontractor and submitted to Omya weekly with dates, times and the areas where watering was performed.

##### **Frequency of Road Washing**

During 2006 road washing and street cleaning took place throughout the year. On some days, several roads were washed or swept, while on other days, only one road was washed or swept. In a few instances, a road was swept and washed on the same day. The summary of activities is below:

- Roads Washed: 243 days
- Roads Swept: 26 days