Town Road and Bridge Standards

On June 5, 2019, the Vermont agencies of Transportation and Natural Resources released an updated State-approved Town Road and Bridge Standards template. (Click the "fillable form" link below.) A primary reason for updating these standards is to give municipalities more flexibility in choosing the parts of these standards they would like to adopt and to make it easier for FEMA to understand the standards each municipality has adopted in the event of a federally declared disaster. The agencies worked closely with VLCT on this effort and also involved the Vermont Local Roads program and the regional planning commissions to solicit reviews and input from the municipalities.

In accordance with Act 110 of the 2010 legislative session, the Town Road and Bridge Standards were last reviewed and approved (unchanged) in 2017, and the next deadline is 2021. However, there is a practical need to update the standards sooner to eliminate the overlap with the Municipal Roads General (stormwater) Permit standards, which all towns must follow. The MRGP standards only cover “hydrologically-connected” local roads (about 50 percent of local roads on average). By comparison, the Town Road and Bridge Standards are voluntary, also include storm water management and flood resilience, construction and safety practices, and apply to all town highways.

The existing (January 2013) template can remain in effect through July 31, 2019. After that date, it will no longer be considered the State-approved template. Consequently, we strongly encourage all municipalities to consider adopting the new 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards template prior to August 1, 2019.

2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards. The template has seven sections and is organized around hydrologically-connected and non-hydrologically connected roads. As noted in the table on page 1 of the template, Sections 1 and 2 are required for connected roads, and Section 3 is required for all bridges and culverts over perennial streams. For the non-connected roads, municipalities can choose which specific standards they wish to adopt.

To be eligible for increased funding under the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) rule (CVR 10-000-001) and to be eligible for an additional 10 percent State share funding on Town Highway Structures and Class 2 Town Highway grants, a municipality need only circle Yes under the hydrologically-connected road segments column (Sections 1 and 2) and then circle Yes for Section 3. All other choices may be circled No. Adoption of what essentially is mandatory under the MRGP and the Stream Alteration Permit standards may seem redundant; however, it makes it clear to FEMA that a municipality has formally adopted "codes and standards" in writing.
The state encourages all municipalities to circle **Yes** for as many sections in this new template as they feel comfortable with in order to improve the resiliency of municipal highway infrastructure, enhance the safety of the traveling public, and to realize as many benefits as possible from the FEMA Public Assistance program.

A few Vermont municipalities have much more comprehensive and elaborate standards and specifications related to their highway infrastructure than average. In the past, the state has allowed municipalities to use those documents with a signed certification that they meet or exceed the State-approved template. The 2019 Town Road and Bridge Standards template continues to allow for this, as noted in the proviso in the second paragraph of page 1. VTrans District staff can assist municipalities that fall under that category of "codes and standards."

VTrans District personnel will work with any municipality to explain the various options and answer questions related to the new town road and bridge standards template. Please contact your nearest [VTrans District Office](https://vtrans.vermont.gov/operations/districts) for assistance and information.

**Attachments:**

- [Town Road and Bridge Standards fillable form.pdf](https://www.vlct.org/sites/default/files/Town%20Road%20and%20Bridge%20Standards%20fillable%20form.pdf)

**Links**

[1] https://vtrans.vermont.gov/operations/districts