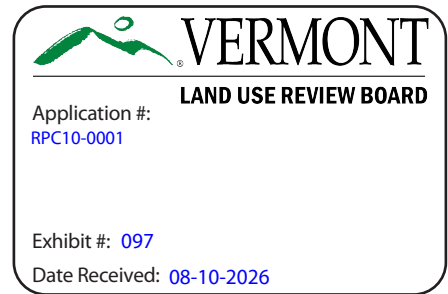




STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



August 10, 2026

Kyle Katz
Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission
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Janet M. Hurley
Vermont Land Use Review Board
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RE: Comments on the TRORC Draft Regional Plan

Dear Mr. Katz and Chair Hurley,

I am writing as the State Representative for Orange-2 (Bradford, Fairlee, and West Fairlee) to submit my concerns regarding the draft TRORC regional plan currently under review. I am submitting this letter to both TRORC and the Land Use Review Board so that my concerns are part of the record for both the town-level adoption process and the Board's ongoing review.

I remain committed to the underlying intent of Act 181: unleashing public and private investment in the areas most able to accommodate rapid, dense home building, while protecting the working lands and natural resources that make Vermont's rural communities what they are. It is precisely because of that commitment that I am raising the following concerns now.

1. Lack of adequate public engagement and input. I have heard directly from a significant number of constituents across Orange-2 who feel they were not given a meaningful opportunity to weigh in on this draft before it reached the hearing stage. This concern is echoed in the Board's own August 3rd preapplication response, which notes that the Board is unable to determine whether TRORC's outreach met the statutory standard for meaningful participation, and has requested additional evidence that concerns raised by municipalities, citizens, and interest groups were actually addressed.

2. Municipal bodies were not adequately informed about changes to mandatory policy language. Several town officials in my district have indicated they were not clearly informed about the shift from advisory to mandatory ("shall") language in key provisions of this draft, including policies governing fossil fuel heating restrictions, EV charging requirements, development on gravel roads, and density limits in rural areas. Municipalities should have clear, direct notice when policy language moves from a recommendation to a requirement, given the binding effect this has on future development in their communities.

3. Specific policies will restrict or prevent economic development and rural housing development. The Board's own review flags several of these same mandatory provisions as overly restrictive and potentially in conflict with the plan's stated housing and economic development goals. I share the Board's concern that provisions such as the ban on new principal retail in rural-general areas, the cap on multi-unit buildings of six or more units, and the prohibition on Act 250 housing projects on gravel roads will make it harder, not easier, for our rural communities to build the housing and economic capacity they need.

4. This plan does not adequately respect local planning and zoning authority. As someone who believes strongly in local control, I am concerned that the breadth and rigidity of the mandatory provisions in this draft override the judgment of local officials and residents who understand their own communities best. Local governments should be the ones deciding how their towns grow, not a regional plan imposing mandatory restrictions with limited local buy-in. This concern extends to the broader

structure of this process. Act 181 gave regional planning commissions, which are appointed bodies rather than directly elected ones, the duty to map the areas eligible for Act 250 exemption, with review and approval resting with the Board. That structure was intended to relieve state regulatory burden and create new opportunities for housing and economic activity closer to the communities it affects. Based on what I am hearing from homeowners, farmers, business owners, and local officials in my district, the TRORC draft plan risks doing the opposite. I believe further legislative attention may be needed to ensure that regional mapping, state approval, and Act 250 exemptions are carried out fairly, transparently, and in a way that supports and protects local, citizen-led planning.

I recognize that the Board's preapplication response is advisory and that TRORC retains discretion over how to respond to it. I would strongly encourage TRORC to take these findings seriously, particularly regarding public engagement and the mandatory policies flagged above, and to revise the draft accordingly before it comes back to the Board for adoption. I would also encourage the Board to hold firm on the requirements for additional information outlined in its response, particularly around demonstrating genuine municipal and community support for mandatory provisions.

I am happy to discuss any of this further, and I remain committed to working with TRORC, the Board, and my constituents to get this plan right.

Sincerely,

Monique é. Priestley

State Representative, Orange-2
Vermont House of Representatives
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