



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Dan Delabruere, Agency of Transportation
802-279-2647, Daniel.Delabruere@vermont.gov

Agency of Transportation Celebrates Expanded Amtrak Service in Vermont

Barre, Vt. – This morning, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT), along with Vermont’s congressional delegation and governor, the City of Burlington, and other state, federal, and rail officials, celebrated the start of the expanded Amtrak Ethan Allen Express passenger rail service in Burlington, Ferrisburgh-Vergennes, and Middlebury.

“After decades of work, it’s finally full steam ahead on this momentous day for passenger rail service in Vermont. I know many Vermonters, including Marcelle and me, are excited to have the Ethan Allen return to Burlington, Middlebury, and Vergennes,” said Sen. Patrick Leahy. “Restoring passenger rail service in Vermont has been a priority for me during my time in the Senate, including securing more than \$100 million for rail improvements that have made the restoration of passenger service between Burlington and New York City possible.”

“Expanding and improving reliable, affordable public transportation is absolutely critical to addressing the existential threat of climate change,” said Sen. Bernie Sanders. “The Ethan Allen extension is an important step in that work right here in Vermont. I am grateful to everyone who has been a part of making today a reality. To my mind, our state and federal governments can and must do even more to improve public transportation for all.”

“This is a historic and exciting moment for Vermont,” said Rep. Peter Welch. “Expanded Amtrak service in our region will increase mobility and connectivity for Vermonters and help more folks from outside the Green Mountain State experience all that Vermont has to offer. It’s also a huge win for our economy and our environment, creating an accessible alternative for travel within Vermont and beyond. I’m grateful to all the folks who put in the hard work to bring us to this moment, and I can’t wait to ride the new and improved Ethan Allen line.”

The newly expanded Ethan Allen Express departed Vermont this morning 80% sold out between Castleton, the last Vermont stop, and New York’s Penn Station. Amtrak’s two Vermont passenger rail lines, the Ethan Allen Express and the Vermonter, are top performers in Amtrak’s state-supported services. Ridership has been rising since April of this year after a drop during the winter due to Covid infection rates. Compared to pre-pandemic numbers, ridership increased by 15.8% in April, 11% in May, and 19.3% in June of this year.

“After decades of work and over a hundred million dollars in state and federal investments, today’s re-opening of Amtrak services from downtown Burlington is an exciting day for Vermonters,” said Governor Phil Scott. “All of us here in Vermont are grateful for the support of our federal Department of Transportation partners, our Congressional delegation, state legislators, and countless rail advocates to bring this service to fruition. We are very proud of the collaborative efforts and widespread support to deliver passenger train service from Vermont’s largest city to New York City.”

“We are delighted by the great turnout at Union Station this morning, and we are so grateful for the hard work and commitment by many to bring the train to Burlington,” said Transportation Secretary Joe Flynn. “Above all, AOT would like to thank our Congressional delegation and in particular Senator Leahy for his career-long dedication and effort to secure federal funding and ensure that Amtrak service would be expanded to Burlington, Ferrisburgh-Vergennes, and Middlebury.”

“This morning, for the first time since 1953, a passenger train left Burlington’s downtown train station bound for New York City,” said Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger. “This elusive milestone was forged by years of hard work and investment by advocates and officials of all levels of government. To some, train service brings back past memories and nostalgia. But train travel is also an important part of our future. This new route will provide a needed boost to our local economy and will give Vermonters a lower-carbon connection to New York City and the rest of the Amtrak system.”

The inaugural service was celebrated with refreshments and live music, followed by a series of remarks by city, state, and federal officials. The event culminated in a ribbon-cutting event before the first southbound train departed Union Station for New York City.

Speakers at the event were as follows:

- Joe Flynn, Secretary of Transportation
- Governor Phil Scott
- Sen. Bernie Sanders
- Miro Weinberger, Mayor of Burlington
- Jeff van Oot, Legislative Aide for Sen. Patrick Leahy
- Rebecca Ellis, State Director for Rep. Peter Welch
- Jennifer Mitchell, Federal Railroad Administration Deputy Administrator
- Stephen Gardner, Amtrak Chief Executive Officer
- Raymond D. Hessinger, Director, Freight and Passenger Bureau, New York State Department of Transportation
- Dick Mazza, Vermont Senate Transportation Chair
- Diane Lanpher, Vermont House Transportation Chair
- Selden Houghton, President of Vermont Rail System

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