

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vermont Rail Plan provides a framework for maintaining and enhancing the State’s freight and intercity passenger rail system. Rail is an integral part of the multimodal transportation system that keeps Vermont’s residents, visitors, and economy moving.

Vermont’s Rail System

There are two intercity passenger rail services operated by Amtrak. Service in Vermont was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March, 2020. *The State is committed to restoring Amtrak service on existing routes as a top priority.* Over the last five years the two services carried approximately 95,000 passengers in Vermont per year.

- The **Vermont** operates daily between Washington, D.C. and St. Albans. In Vermont, it travels over 185 miles of line owned by New England Central Railroad (NECR).
- The **Ethan Allen Express** runs daily from New York City by way of Albany to Rutland. In Vermont, it is routed over tracks owned by the Clarendon & Pittsford Railroad (CLP). *The extension to Burlington, with new stops in Middlebury and Vergennes, is anticipated to begin running in 2022.*

Vermont has approximately 580 miles of active freight track, and 6.9 million tons of freight moved on them in 2018. This network connects Vermont businesses to regional, national, and international markets and keeps thousands of trucks off Vermont’s highways.

See Chapters 4 and 5 of the Rail Plan for essential information. See Technical Memos 1 and 2 for more detail about Vermont’s rail system.



Existing Conditions and Needs

See Chapter 5 of the Plan or Tech Memos 3 and 4 for more detail.



Despite continued infrastructure investments **there is much left to do to meet state of good repair and current weight standards.**



Wise network investments made a detour possible when part of the Hoosac Tunnel in Massachusetts collapsed. **We need to continue to plan for resilience in advance of the unexpected.**



Railroads are changing hands and business models are shifting. **It is essential to maintain and improve access to regional short-haul railroads and competitive connections to major Class I railroads.**



“All aboard!” Short-term planning, marketing, and communicating will be essential as train service resumes in Vermont. **Long-term** enhanced coordination among State agencies, chambers, RPCs, and others is needed to get full economic, transportation, GHG reduction, and community benefits from this important travel asset.



During the pandemic, Vermont homes have been selling quickly in places they haven’t in years, and reportedly to more people currently living out of the State than before. **Long-term population change and broader effects of the pandemic may bring new opportunities.**



From 2011 through 2018, freight rail tonnage associated with Vermont has increased. **Growth in tonnage is positive but calls for planning.**



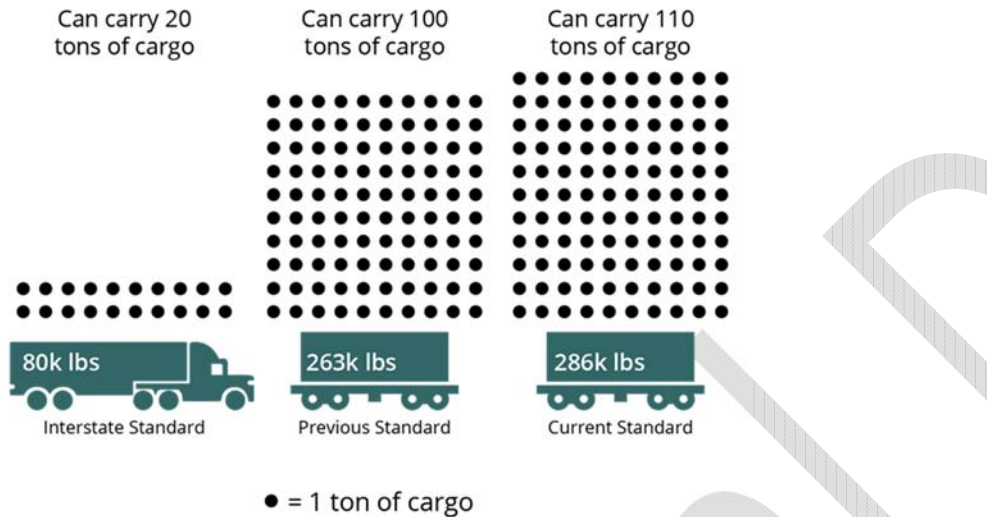
Protecting and marketing rail spurs and parcels zoned to use rail access provides options for new or expanding businesses.



Rail used for its most-appropriate purposes, such as long-distance movements, is much more energy-efficient than trucks or cars.

How Do Our Skis, Coffee, Corn, and Road Salt Get Here?

Most of what Vermonters and our businesses rely on comes by truck or train. Each of these modes have their roles. Trains are especially efficient at moving heavy goods long distances. Trucks are especially efficient for last mile distribution and time-sensitive goods. We can further maximize our transportation system to save money and protect the environment.



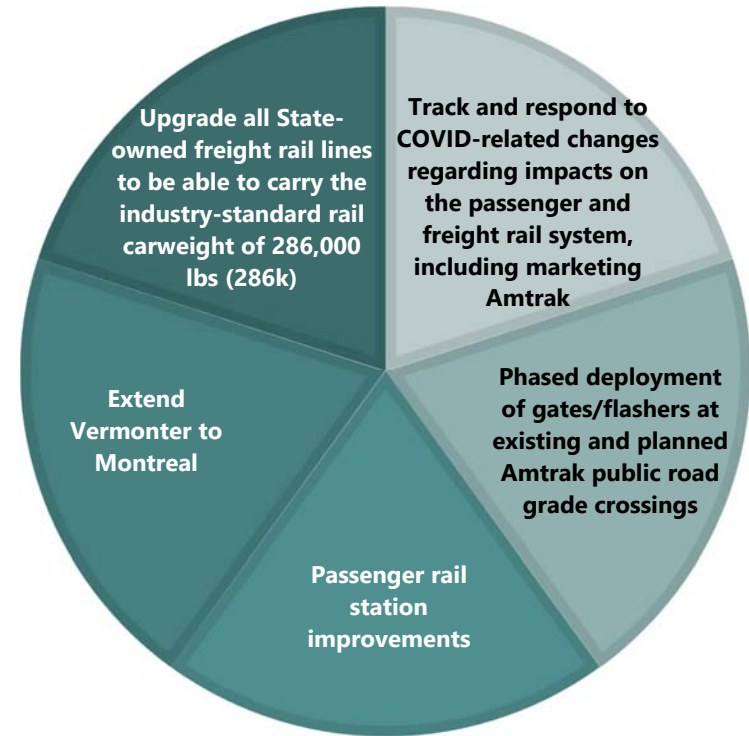
Potential Initiatives and Recommendations

Potential initiatives are the range of actions that would support and enhance intercity passenger rail and freight rail in Vermont. They were developed from stakeholder input, analysis in Tech Memos 3, and still-relevant projects from the 2015 Rail Plan. See the list of initiatives anyone could productively pursue in the Meeting Handout at the Rail Plan update web page or Chapter 6 of the Rail Plan.

Recommendations are initiatives VTrans intends to implement. This manageable subset of the initiatives was developed from technical analysis, qualitative considerations, stakeholder comments, and, for passenger rail-related initiatives, ridership modeling (see Tech Memo 4). Technical analysis was performed in a manner consistent with VTrans Project Selection and

Prioritization Processes (VPSP2). The 22 recommendations are divided into three tiers of priority. **The recommendations are sorted by goal area within the tier—there is no additional prioritization of initiatives within each tier.**

The **first priority set of recommendations to work on in the next five years** are shown below. See Chapter 8 of the Rail Plan for more recommendations.



What Happens Next?

- The Vermont Rail Plan will be completed, publicized, and used.
- The related Vermont Freight Plan will follow later in 2021.
- The [Rail/Freight webtool](#) will stay a one-stop source of information.
- VTrans looks forward to coordinating with a range of partners on this and all the ways we together achieve Vermont's goals.

Working to get you there!

