

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

Vermont has two intercity passenger rail services operated by Amtrak. Service was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. *Service is expected to resume in July 2021.* Over the last five years the two services carried approximately 95,000 passengers in Vermont annually.

- 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 supports Vermont businesses and keeps thousands of trucks off Vermont’s highways.

See Chapters 4 and 5 of the Rail Plan for more information or Technical Memos 1 and 2 for details. All material is at: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports>.

Existing Conditions and Needs



Despite continued infrastructure investments **there is much left to do to meet state of good repair and 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. This calls for **competitive access** to short-haul railroads and North American Class I railroads.



“All aboard!” Short-term planning and marketing will be essential as train service resumes. Long-term enhanced coordination would get full economic, transportation, GHG reduction, and community benefits.



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. Population change and effects of the pandemic may bring new opportunities for increased ridership.



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



Marketing industrial parcels with 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.**

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

Greenhouse Gas from a Trip from Vermont to NYC

(Approximate lbs. CO₂/passenger)

Essex Junction to NYC



272



90

Rutland to NYC



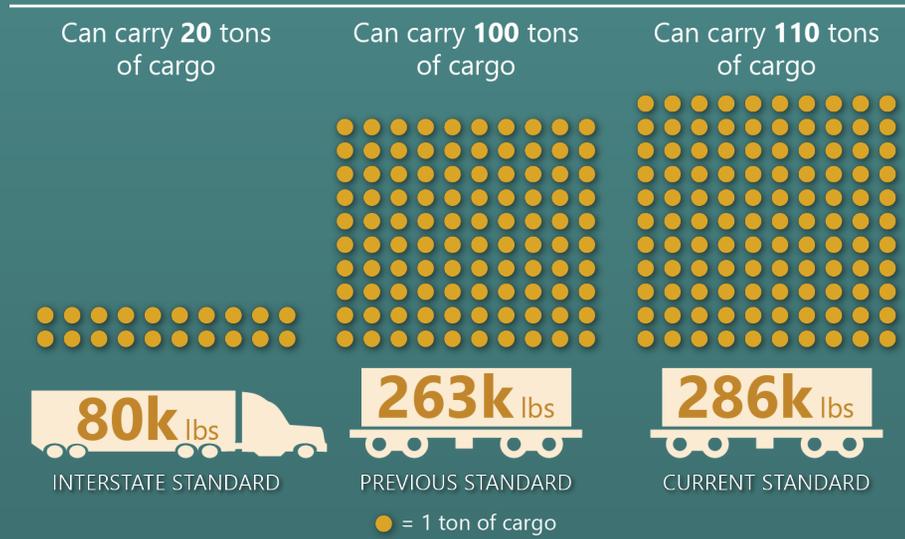
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67

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. Rail is on average four times more fuel-efficient than trucks, moving a ton of freight more than 470 miles on a gallon of fuel. 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 by transporting more freight by rail.



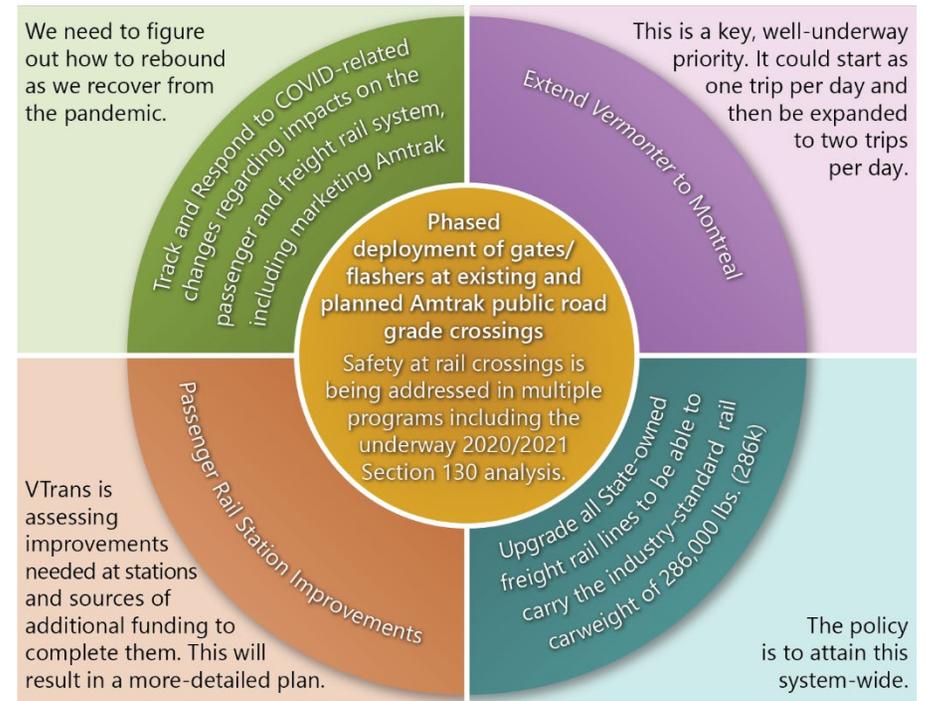
Potential Initiatives and Recommendations

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 comments, data analysis, and still-relevant projects from the 2015 Rail Plan. See the list of initiatives that anyone could productively pursue with support of the Rail Plan in Chapter 6 or the Meeting Handout posted on the Rail Plan Update web page.

Recommendations are initiatives VTrans intends to focus on first. This manageable subset was developed from analysis, qualitative considerations, stakeholder comments, and, for passenger rail initiatives, ridership modeling (see Tech Memo 4). Technical analysis was performed in a manner consistent with VTrans Project Selection and Prioritization Processes (VPSP2).

The 23 recommendations are divided into three tiers of priority. **The recommendations are sorted by goal area within each tier—there is no prioritization of initiatives within each tier.**

The **first priority tier of recommendations VTrans intends to focus on** are shown below. See Chapter 8 of the Rail Plan for the other two tiers.



What Happens Next?

- The Vermont Rail Plan will be publicized and used.
- The coordinated Vermont Freight Plan will follow later in 2021.
- The [Rail/Freight webtool](#) will stay a one-stop source of information.
- VTrans will coordinate with a range of partners on all the ways we together achieve Vermont's goals. **Working to get you there!**