



Update of Vermont Rail Plan & Vermont Freight Plan Presentation #1

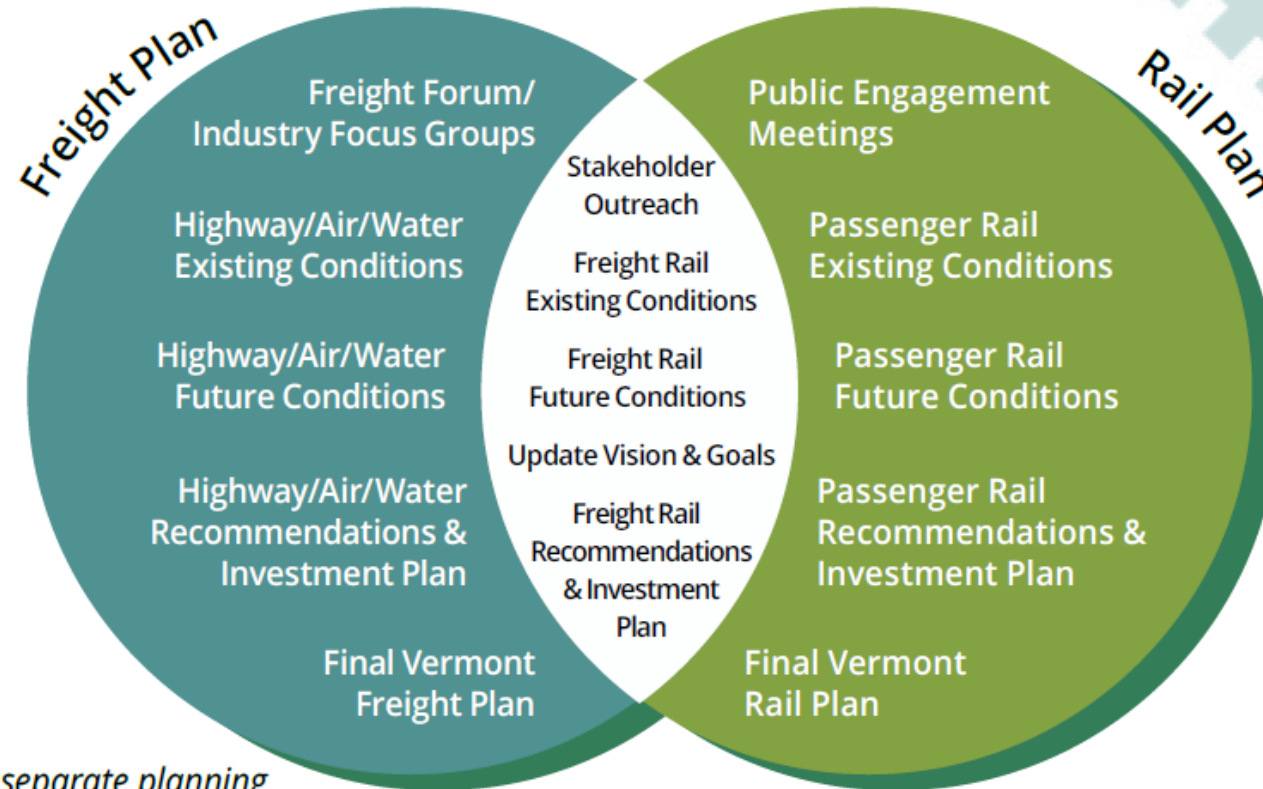
Vermont Rail Advisory Council Meeting –
September 9, 2020



Background

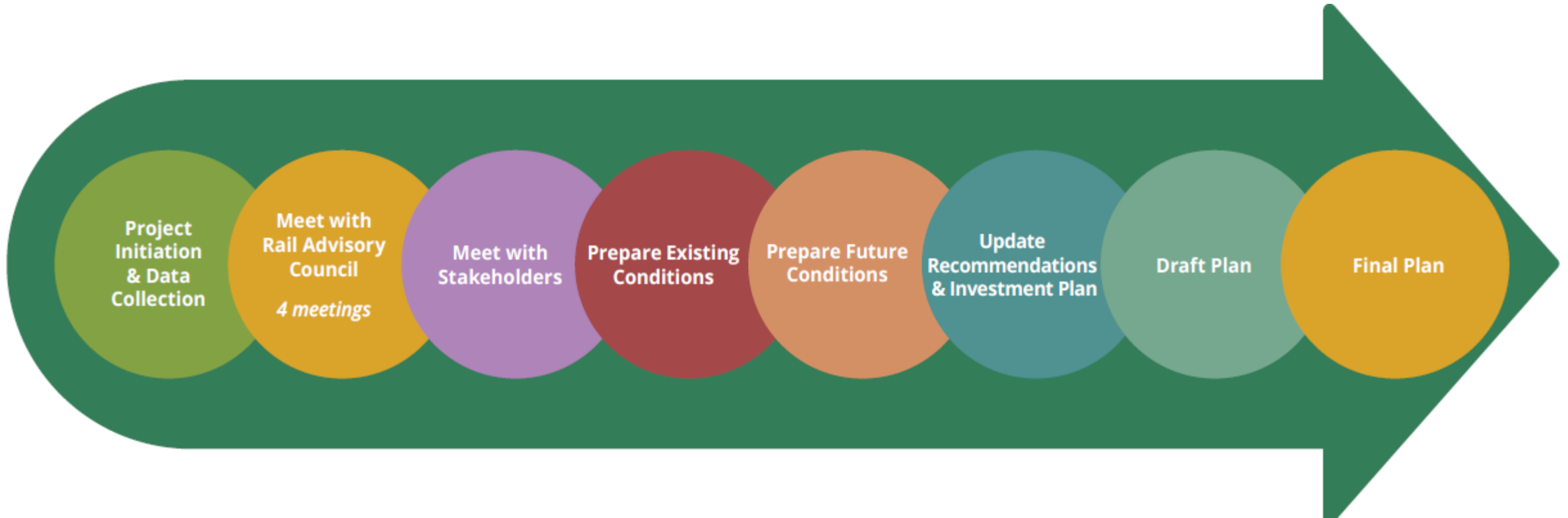
- FRA requires a State Rail Plan at a minimum every four years to remain eligible for certain rail grants
- FHWA requires a State Freight Plan every five years in order to obligate Freight Formula funds
- The Rail Plan will cover freight and intercity passenger rail services
- The Freight Plan will cover all modes: rail, highway, air, & water
- **VRAC Role:**
 - Provide guidance on overall direction & development of the Rail Plan
 - Review key deliverables

Rail Plan & Freight Plan Overlaps

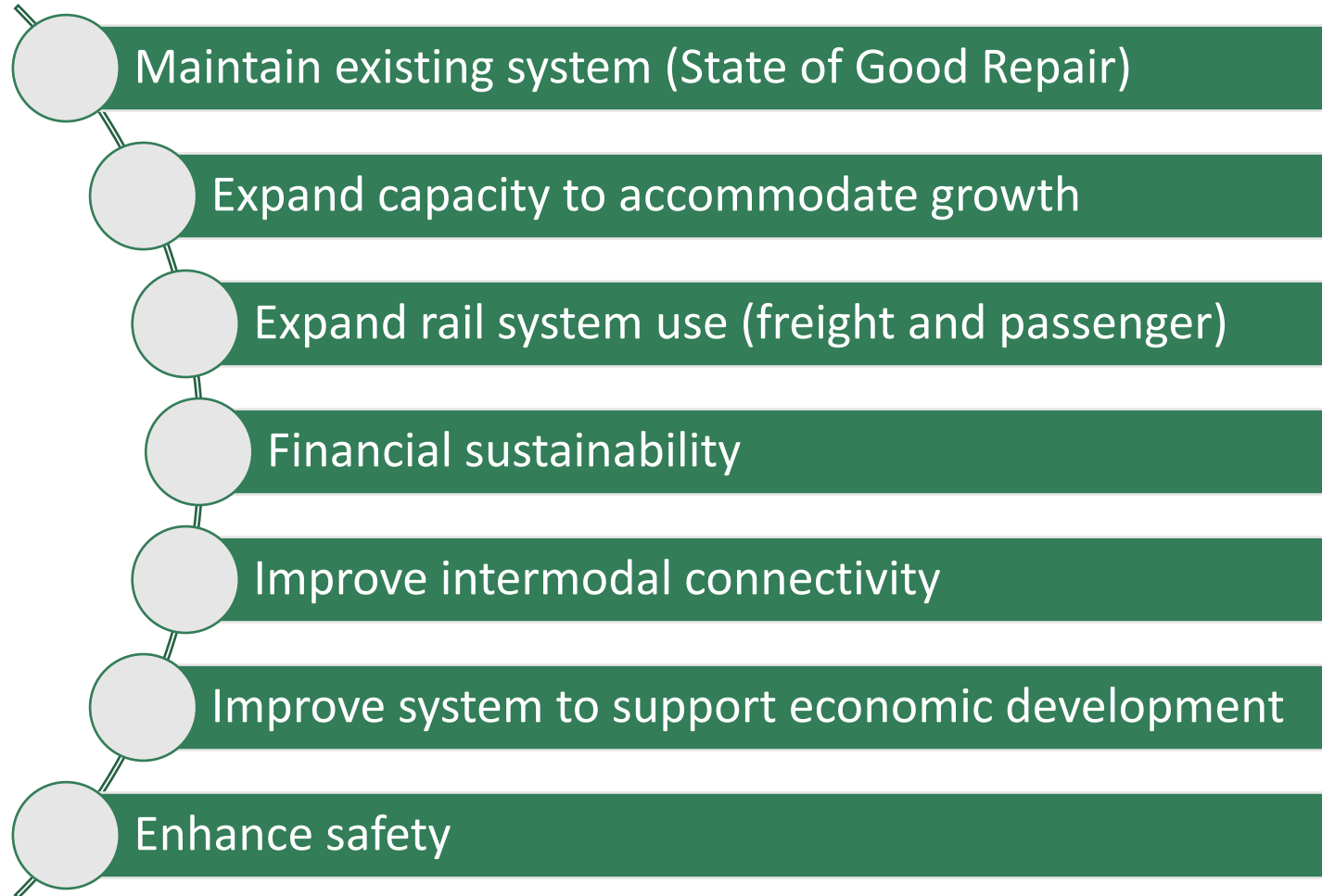


Although two separate planning efforts, the Freight and Rail Plans share common tasks and work products.

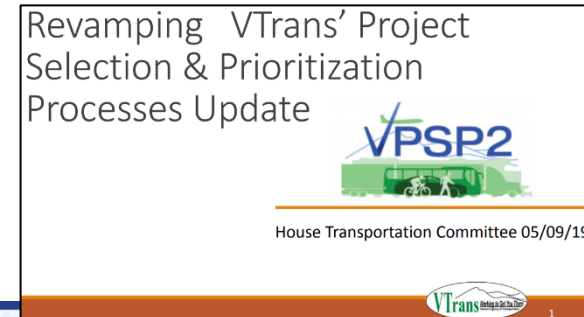
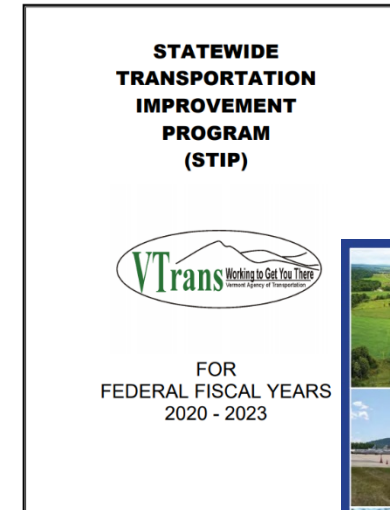
Rail Plan Update - Project Steps



2015 Rail Plan Goals



- Aligned with other efforts
- Open for minor refinement



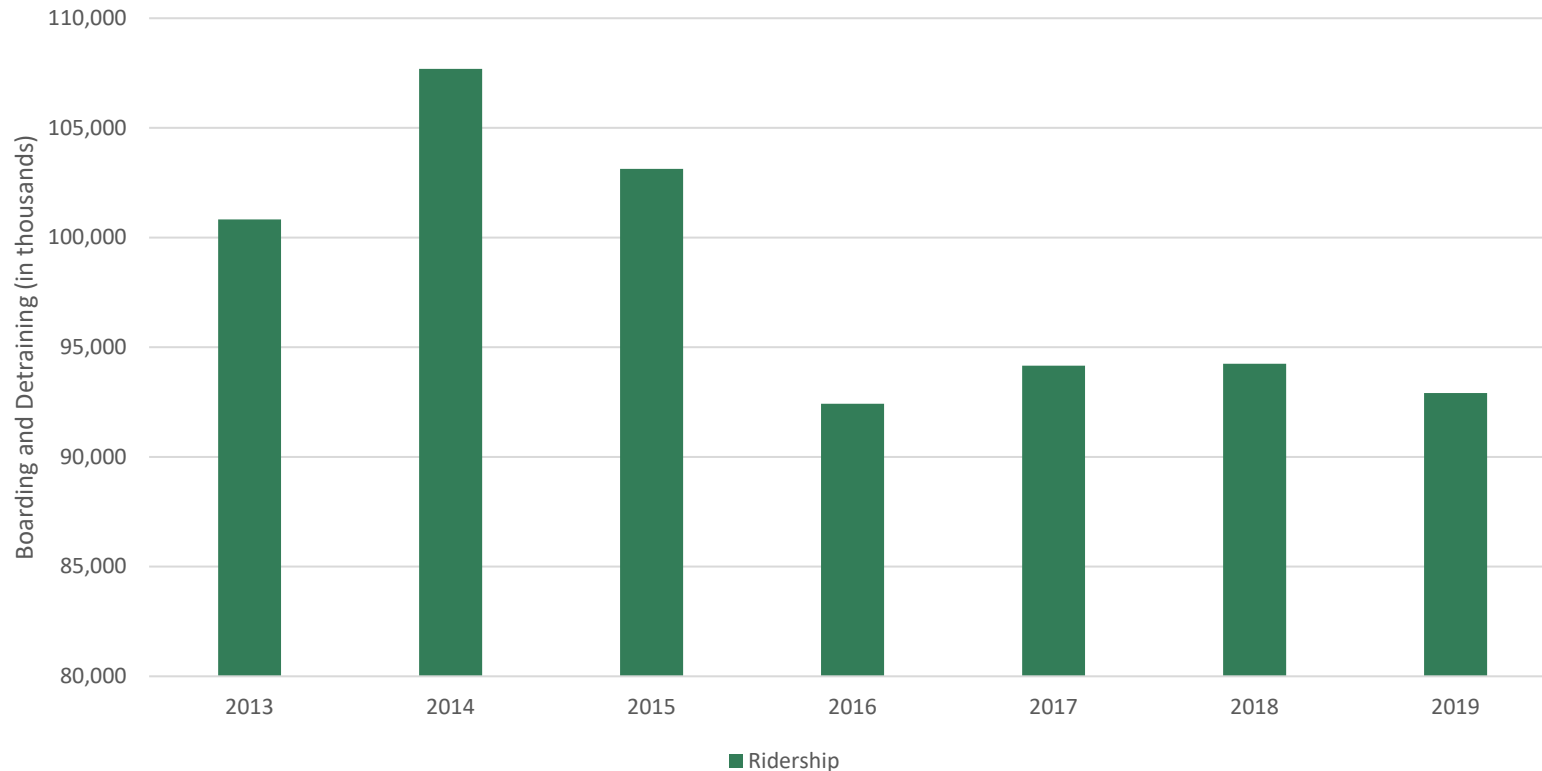
Additional Information

- For more information on the rail and freight plans including
 - Newsletters
 - Data Trends Summary
 - Existing Conditions Technical Memo (forthcoming)
 - Online map with information and stakeholder feedback tool
 - Recording of full presentation and slides (forthcoming)
- Rail Plan: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports>
- Freight Plan: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/freight>

Passenger Rail Trends



Passenger Rail Ridership



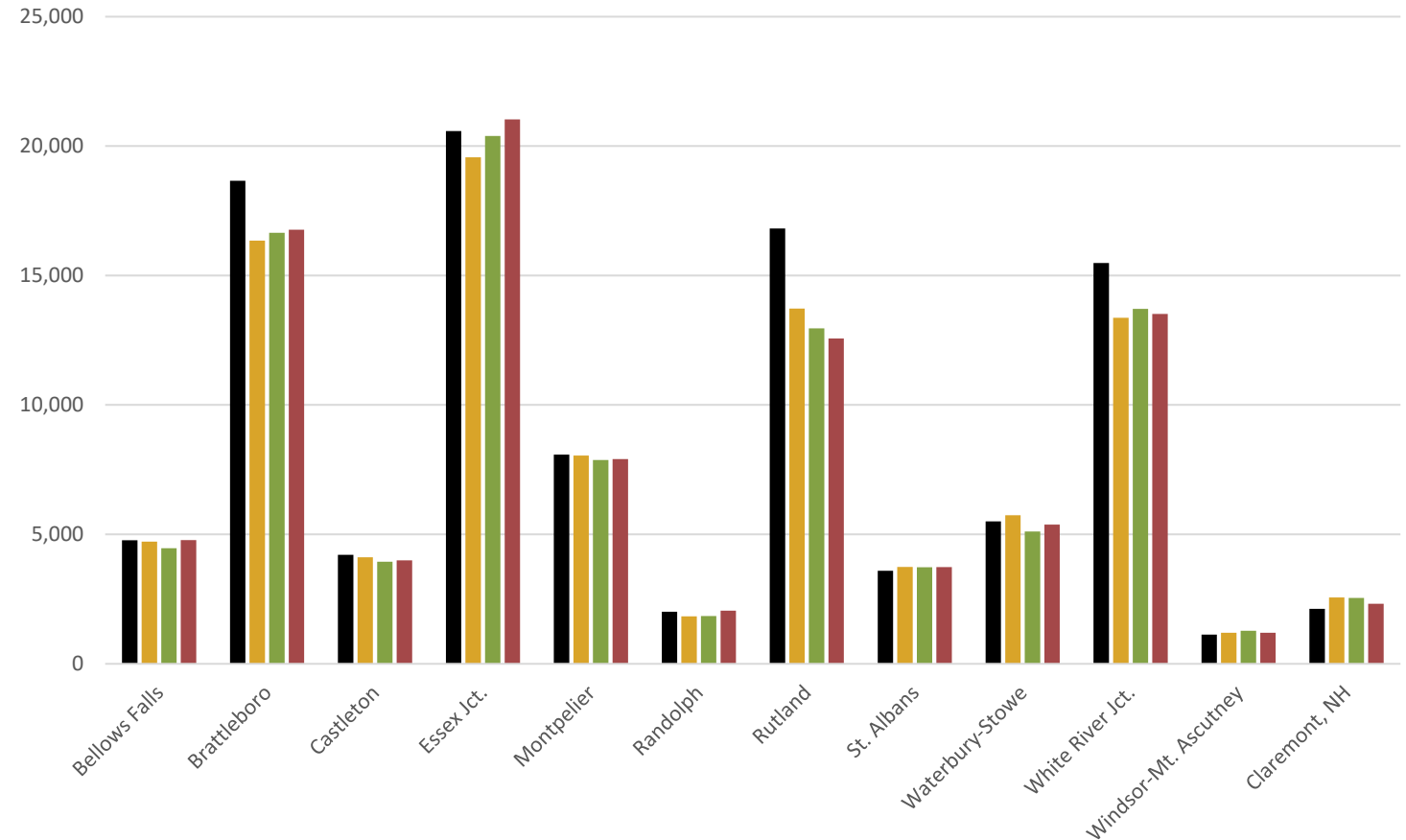
- Overall decline in VT Amtrak ridership since FY2013
 - Ridership has steadily risen in NY and MA over the same time.
 - NH growing ridership since a low in 2015

Passenger Rail Ridership by Station

- Essex Junction, Brattleboro, Rutland, and White River Junction = 67% of VT ridership
 - Ridership at Brattleboro, Rutland, and White River Junction are down since 2013

Top 3 city pairs by ridership and revenue

- 1) Rutland – NYC
- 2) Brattleboro – NYC
- 3) Essex Junction - NYC



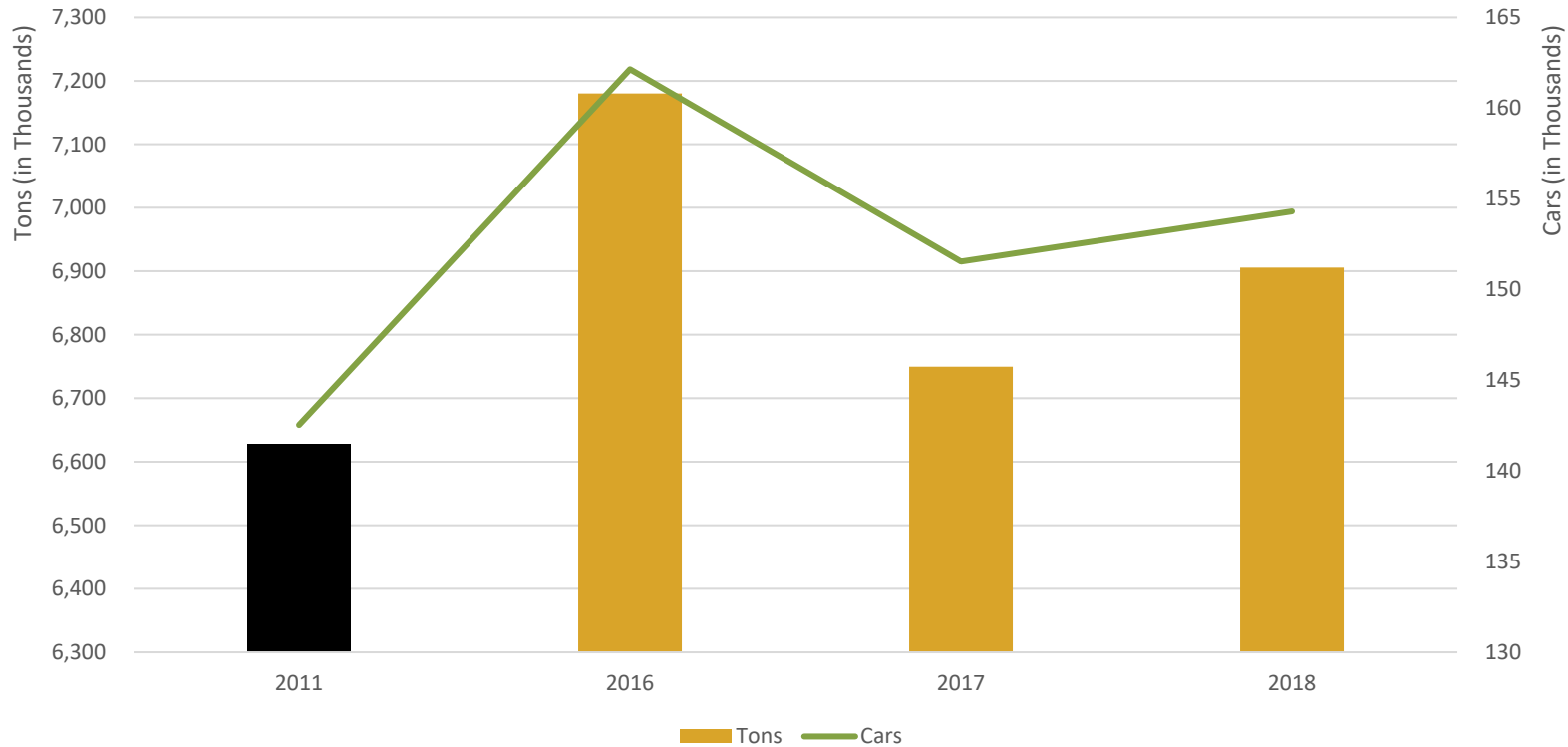
■ 2013 ■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019

Data for 2014-2016 omitted for space

Freight Rail Trends



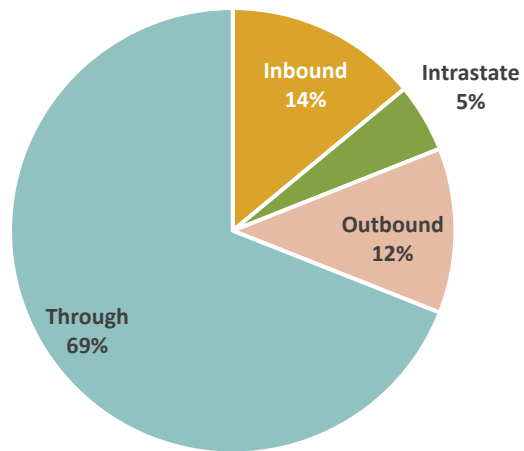
Freight Rail Overview



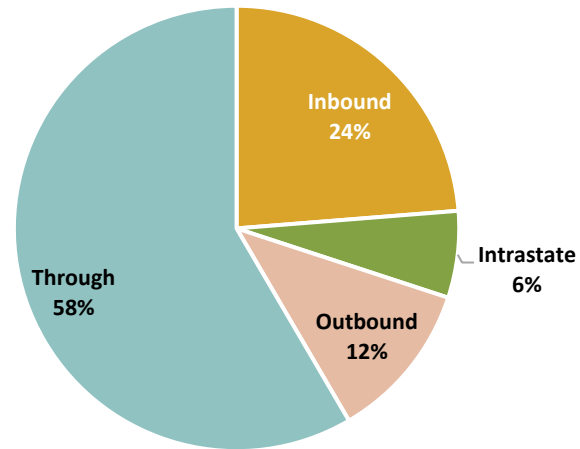
- 4% growth in tons, 8% growth in carloads since 2011
 - Data not available 2012-2015 (STB Waybill Confidential Sample)

Freight Rail By Direction

2011 Tons



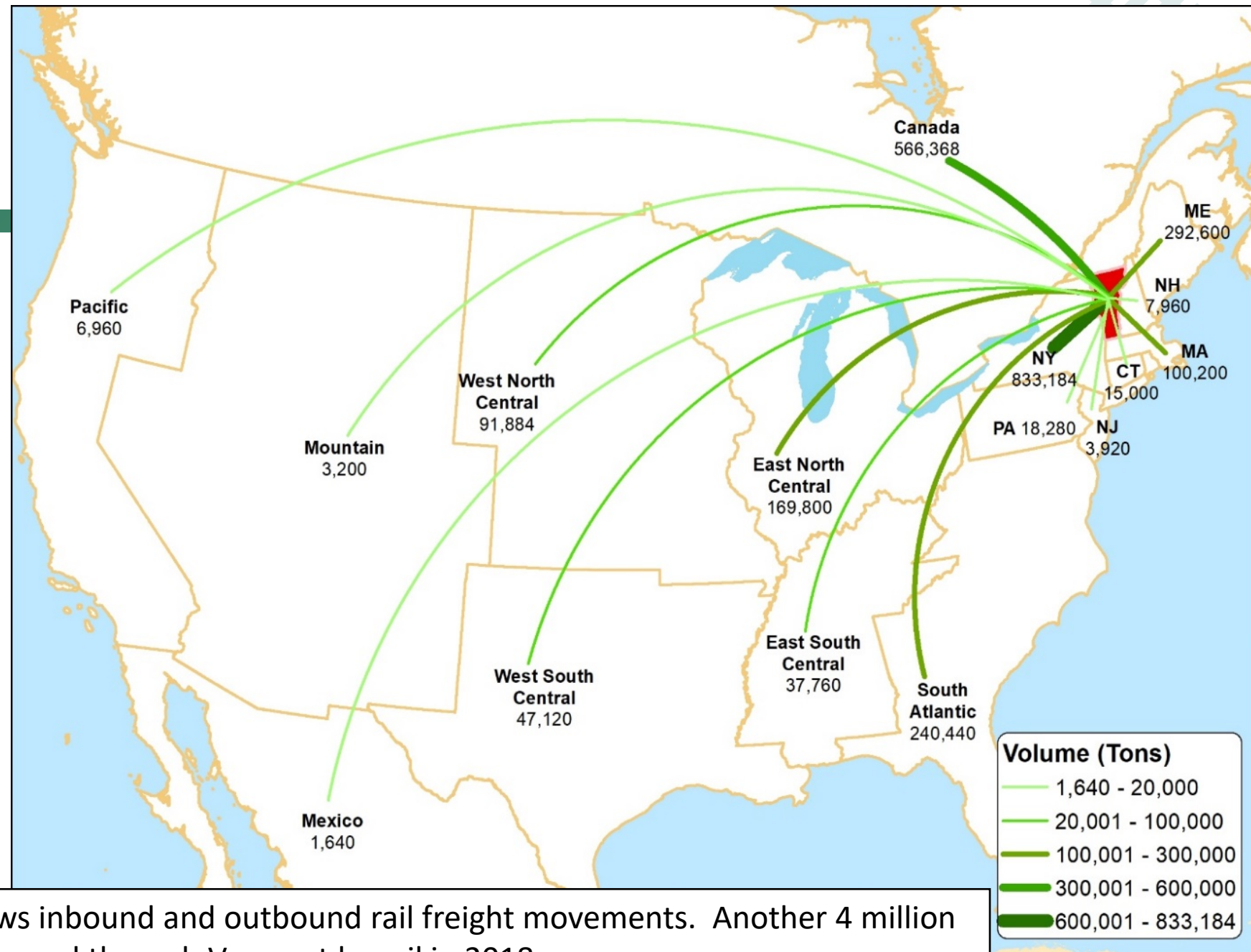
2018 Tons



New York (inbound) & Maine (outbound) are top trading partners

Freight Rail Trading Partners

- Vermont's rail shippers are connected to the rest of North America via Vermont's short line railroads and its connections to national (Class I) networks

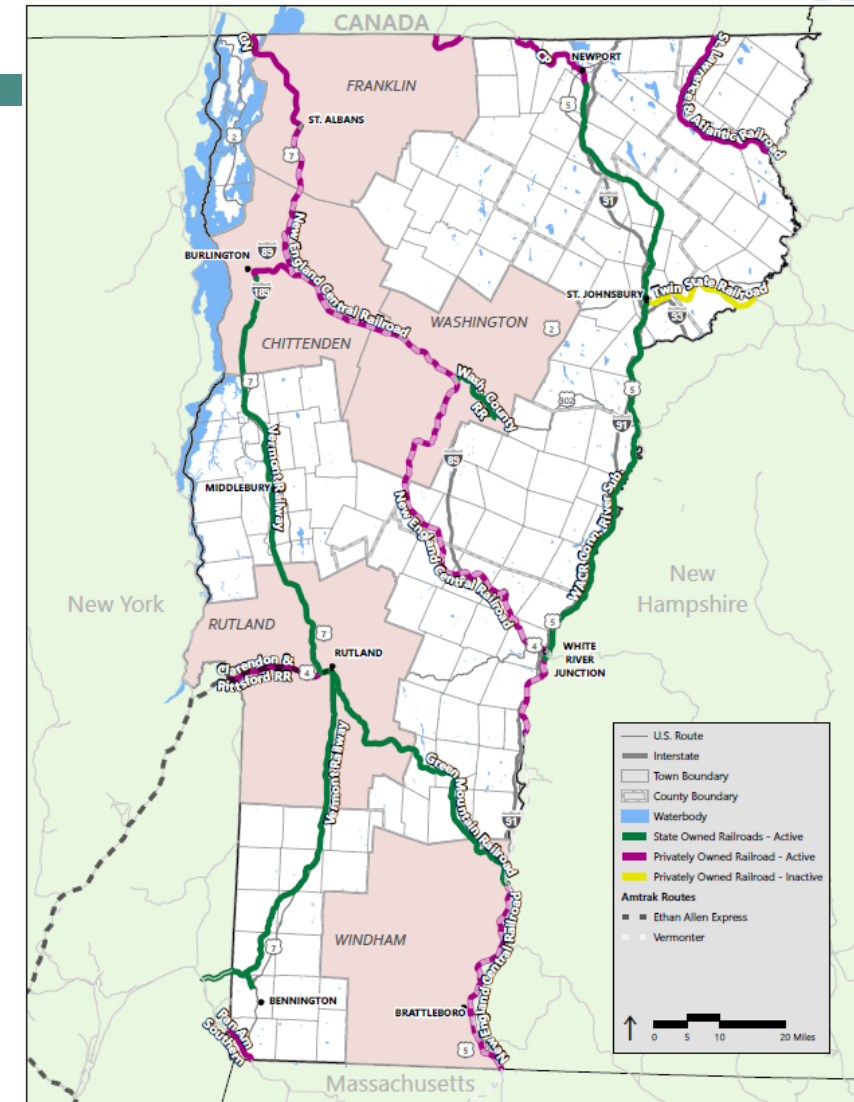


Note: Map only shows inbound and outbound rail freight movements. Another 4 million tons (58% of total) moved through Vermont by rail in 2018

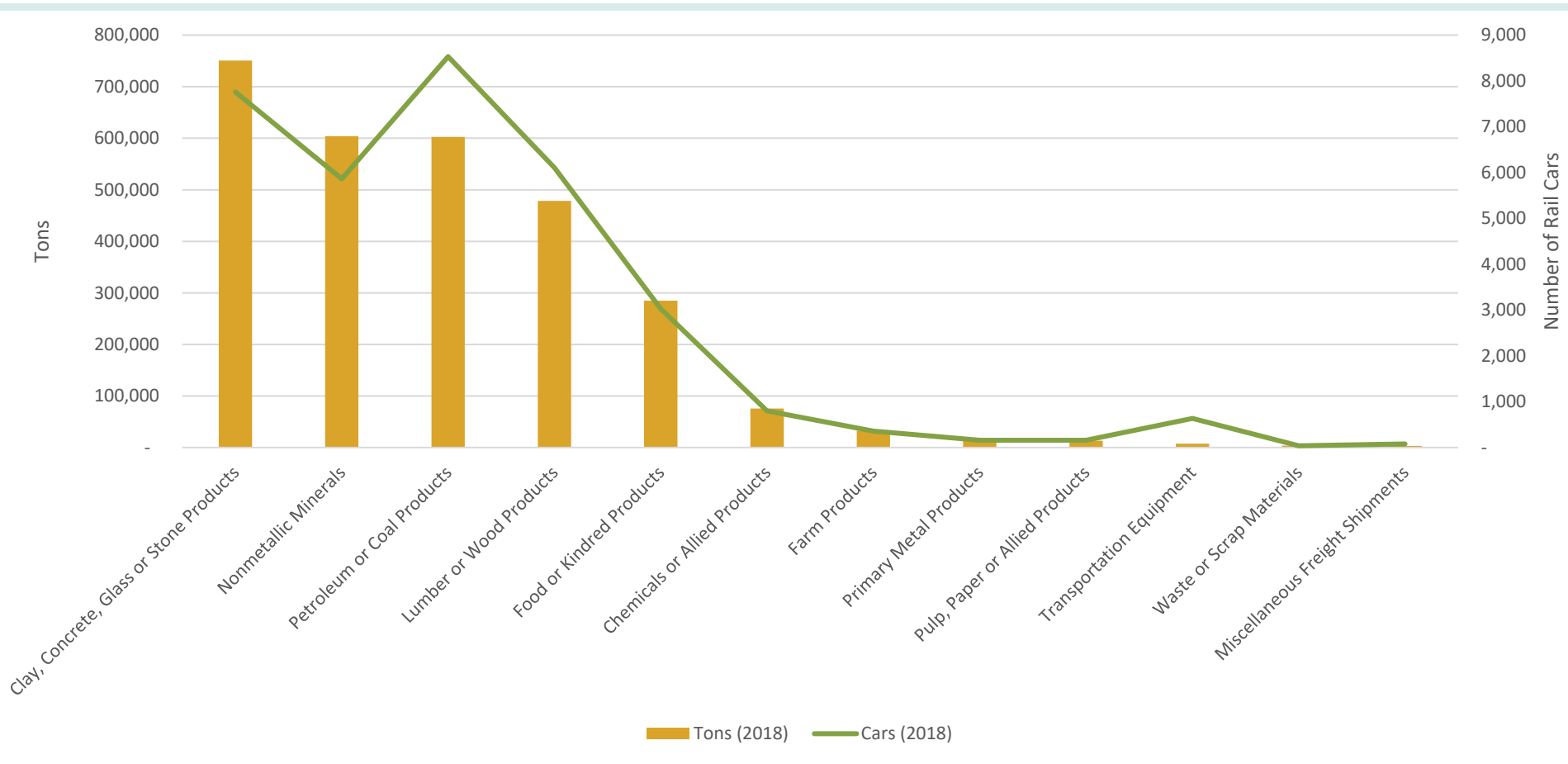
Freight Rail Top Counties



- Top 3 destination counties:
 - Chittenden
 - Windham
 - Washington
- Top 3 origin counties:
 - Rutland
 - Franklin
 - Chittenden
- Same rankings by both tons and carloads



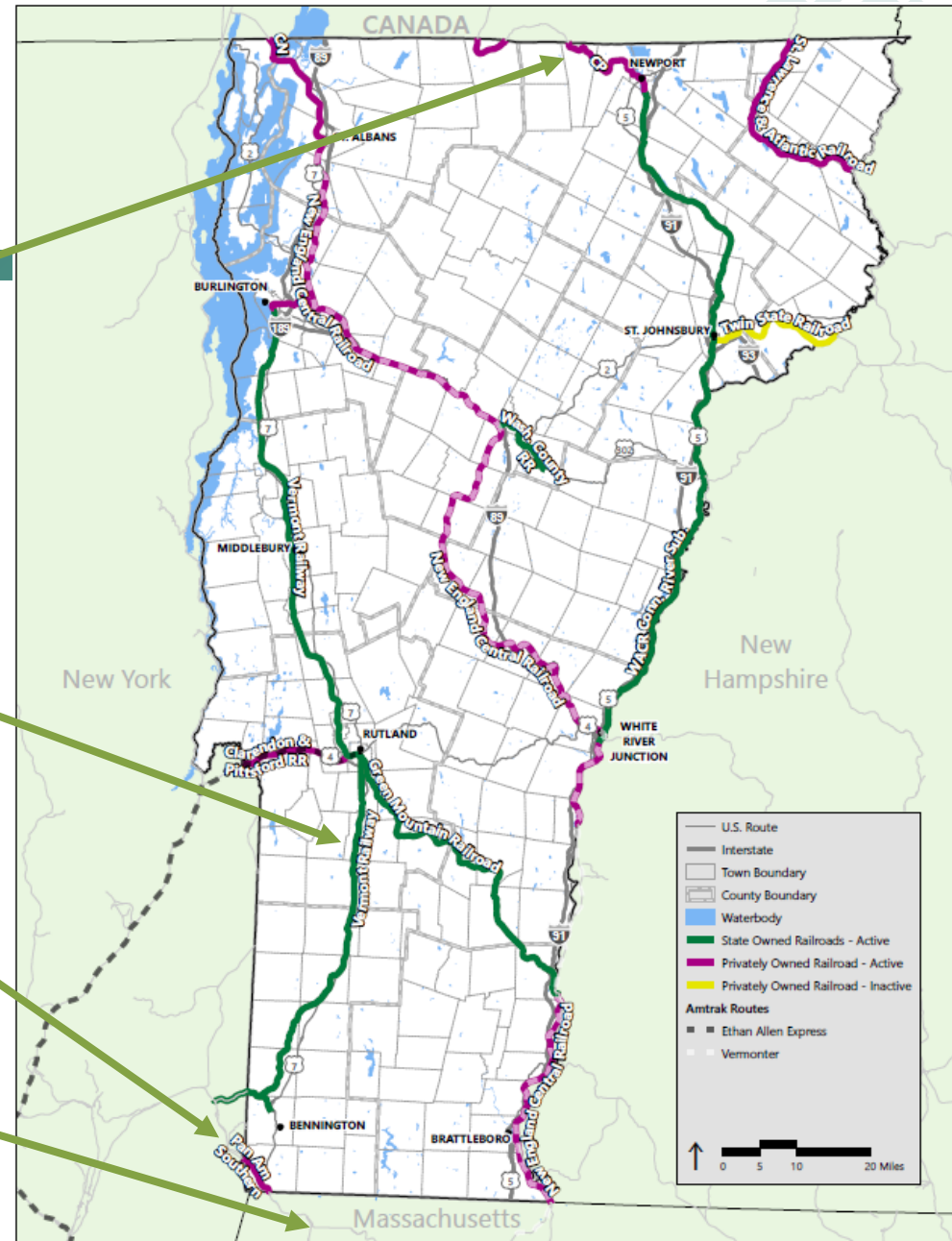
Freight Rail Data



- Since 2011:
 - Clay, Concrete, Glass or Stone Products remains a top commodity
 - Substantial growth in Nonmetallic Minerals
 - Decline in Pulp, Paper, or Allied Products

System Changes

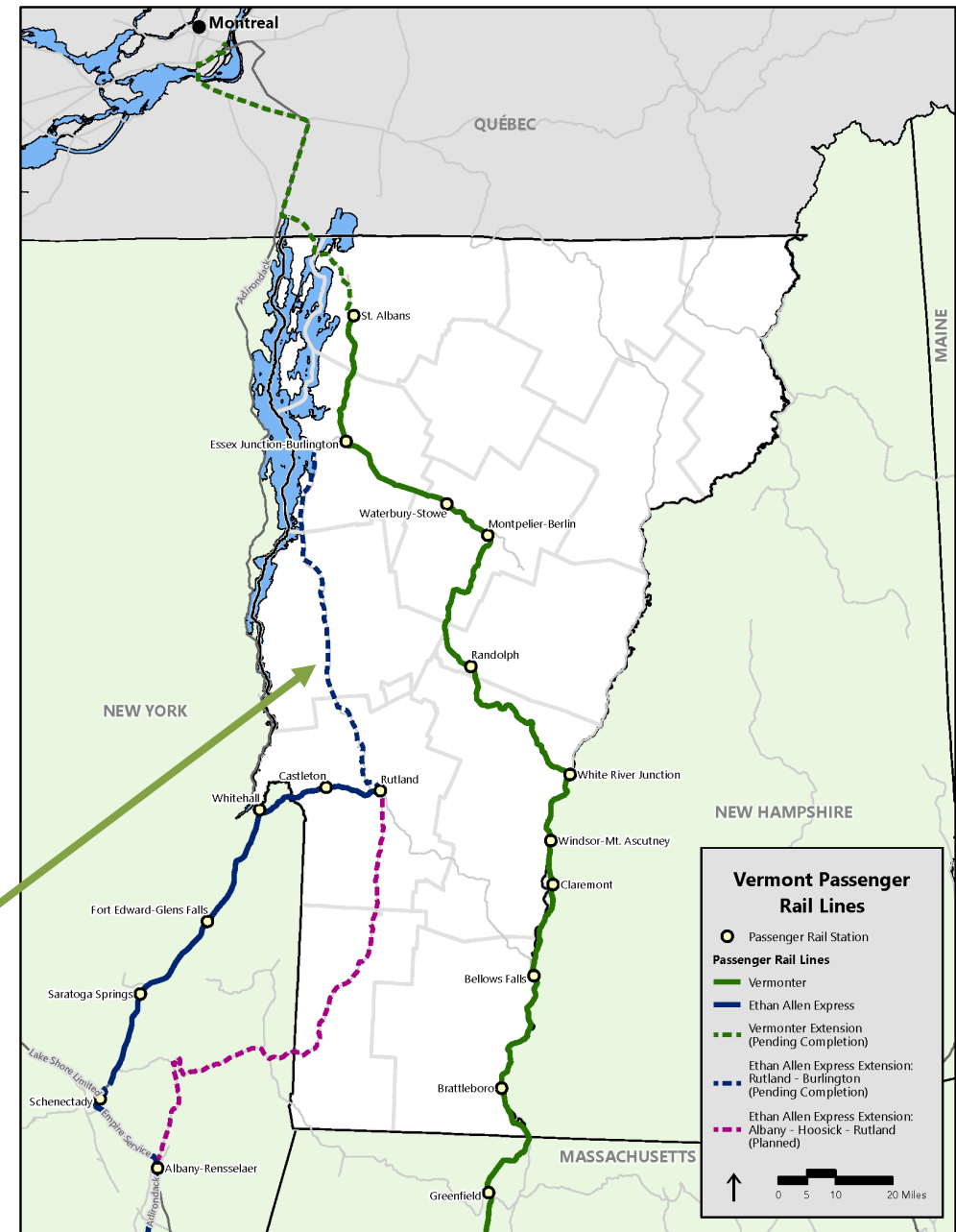
- Central Maine & Quebec acquired by Canadian Pacific
- Work on Western Corridor rail bridges (Hoosick Junction to Rutland) – 2018 BUILD Grant
- Pending sale of Pan Am Railways
- Hoosac Tunnel Closure
 - February – early April 2020
 - Re-route possible because of resilient freight rail network



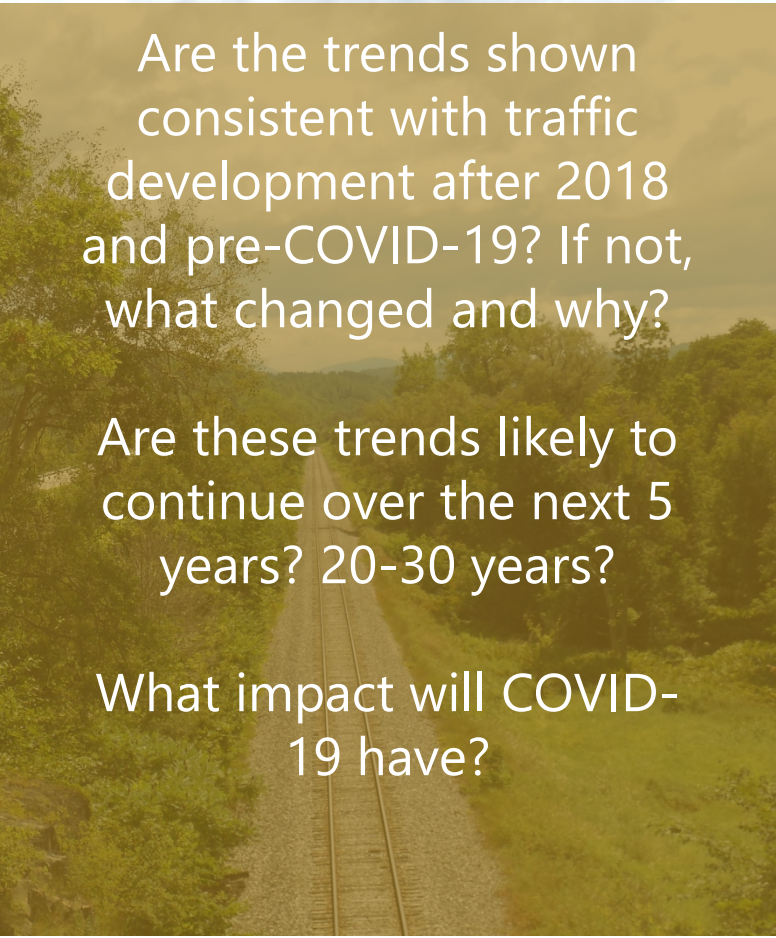
Notable System Changes & Initiatives



- Middlebury Tunnel (in progress)
- Extension of *Ethan Allen Express* to Burlington - 2021




Discussion & Questions



Are the trends shown consistent with traffic development after 2018 and pre-COVID-19? If not, what changed and why?


Are these trends likely to continue over the next 5 years? 20-30 years?

What impact will COVID-19 have?



Diversity of shippers/receivers using rail in Vermont was a concern in the 2015 Rail Plan. How has that trend developed since then? What actions (if any) have been helpful?

Looking forward, what actions might be helpful in the future?



What can be done to continue growing rail freight originating/terminating in the state? (58% remains through traffic)

How do other modes play a role in this? (rail carries 15% of all goods by tonnage)

Status of 2015 Rail Plan Performance Measures

System Effectiveness

- Freight Rail Volumes – 3 million tons with origin/destination in VT
- Recruit Rail-using Businesses – 2 per year
- Passenger Trips on Amtrak – 5% annual increase
- Amtrak/PRR Section 207 measurements (e.g., passenger surveys, delay)

System Condition

- Rail Bridge Capacity – minimum 263,000 pounds for state-owned bridges
- Rail Bridge Capacity – upgrade 3 bridges per year to 286,000 pound capacity
- Grade Crossing Ratings – minimum 3 grade crossing improvements per year
- Rail Weight – upgrade 5 miles per year to 115 pound rail

System Initiatives

- Eliminate Permanent Slow Orders – remove 3 per year
- Continuously Welded Rail – on all current and planned passenger routes
- FRA Track Class 4 – all passenger rail routes (Yes on NECR south of WRJ)
- Remove obstructions to allow unrestricted double stack clearance

KEY

Green- Being met
Yellow- Partially met
Red- Not met
Black- Unknown

Discussion & Question

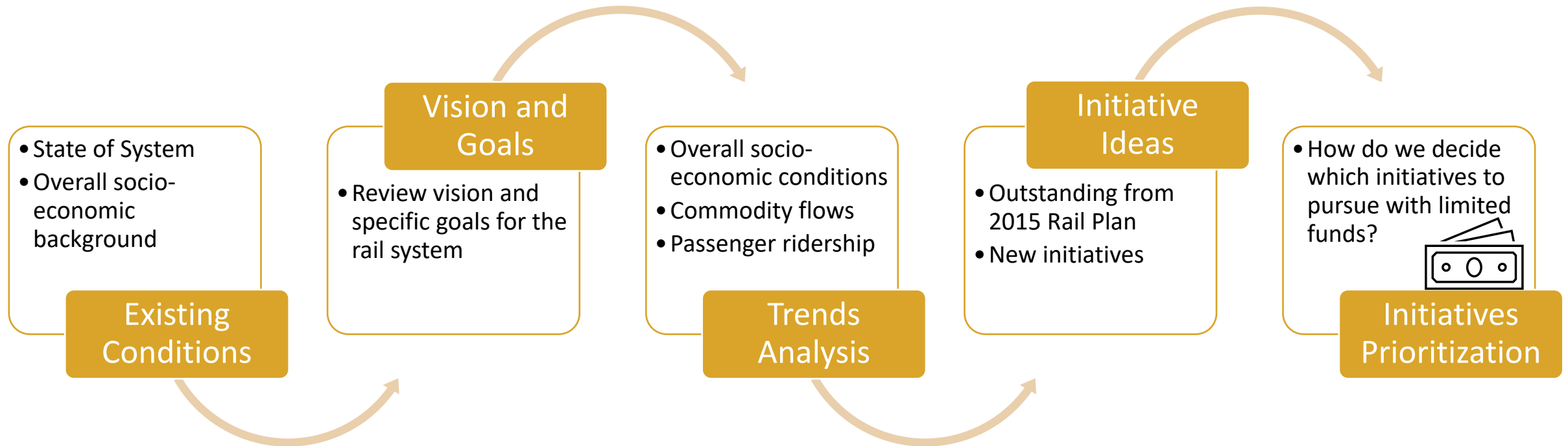


We are considering these measures in relation to other efforts.

Do you have any thoughts about these measures we should consider?



Rail Plan Elements



Initiatives can be projects, but also new computer systems, signal updates, improved coordination, etc. that increase efficiency. These operational and administrative efforts are particularly important given limited funding.

Future of Intercity Passenger Rail

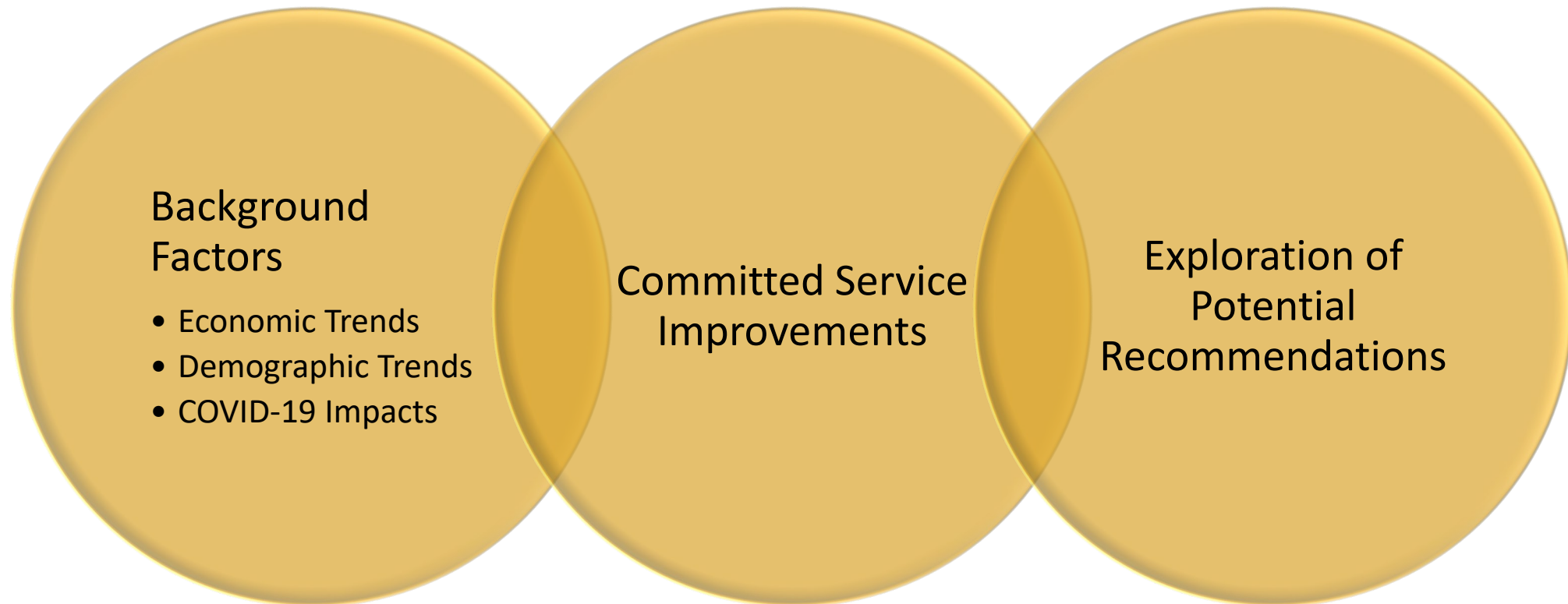
- State policies support continuing modal options such as rail
- Obligation resulting from federal infrastructure grants used to fund capital improvements – state would have to return funds if some initiatives are stopped
- Forecasts of passenger rail demand are underway that reflect
 - Trends in demographics and economy
 - VT state policy and programs
 - Actions in surrounding region that affect service in the State
- Forecasts help explore potential future initiatives

Definitions

- **Forecast:** projection of future ridership
- **Background Factors:** economic trends, funding, COVID-19 impacts, etc. These are outside the control of the Rail Plan and set a range of high/medium/low growth
- **Committed Service Improvements:** projects that are going to occur (or are happening now)
- **Potential Recommendations:** initiatives that may be considered. We could model them to understand potential impacts on ridership

Passenger Rail Forecasting

- Forecast Horizon: 20 years



Passenger Rail Forecasting Options

Background Factors – will model

- Conditions as-is

Committed Service Improvements – will model

- *Vermont* extension to Montreal – 1 train per day each direction
- *Ethan Allen Express* extension to Burlington – 1 train per day each direction

Potential Recommendations – could model

- Albany-Burlington via Bennington on Western Corridor?
- Boston-Montreal via Springfield?
- Increased service frequency for the “Committed Service Improvements”?

- Are there other potential recommendations we should explore?
- Are there any listed here that we do not need to examine?

Process to Evaluate Potential Initiatives

Rail goals consistent with other State goals



Criteria to evaluate pool of initiatives consistent with Vermont Project Selection and Prioritization Process (VPSP2)



Table of potential reasonable initiatives based on 2015 Plan, updated analysis, & outreach



Analysis using criteria & discussion



Draft short set of recommendations for second round of outreach

Online Web Map

- **Link:** <http://bit.ly/VTFreightandRailMap>
- **Purpose:**
 - Collect stakeholder input on issues and potential initiatives
 - Provide valuable information
- What would be of most interest to VRAC members?
 - VTrans initiatives and status
 - Transload locations
 - Amtrak station locations
 - Rail-highway crossing incidents
 - Rail bridge load ratings
 - Truck volumes
 - Other?

Update of Vermont Rail Plan and Vermont Freight Plan

About

Add New Idea / Issue

Share your feedback!

Add a note, including the location, and drop a pin on the map below (optional). You may also upload a photo to illustrate your input. If you have a general comment or question about the planning process, scroll down.

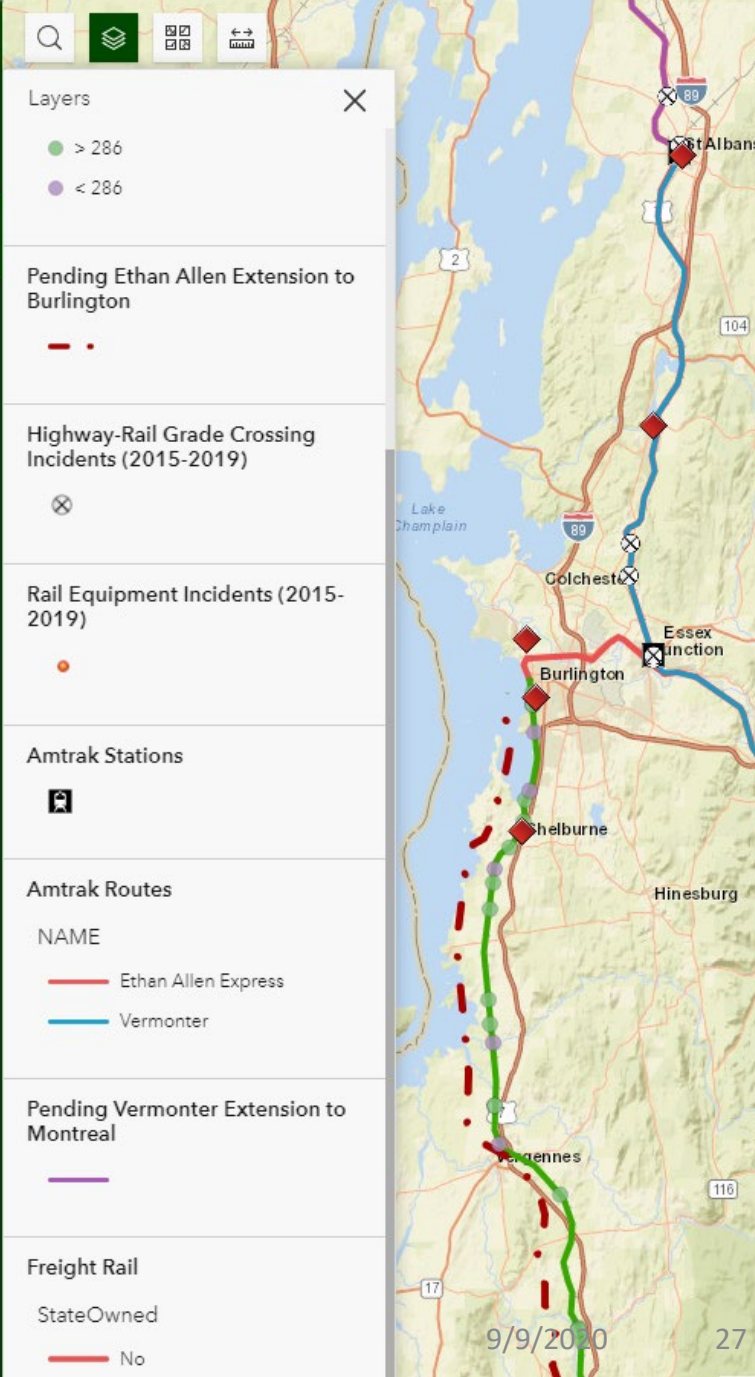
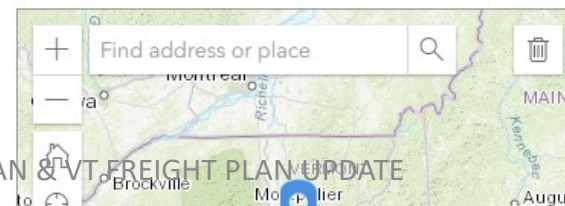
What is the issue or idea?

(e.g. an issue with a section of rail line, rail crossing, rail passenger issue, or a freight issue for another mode of travel)

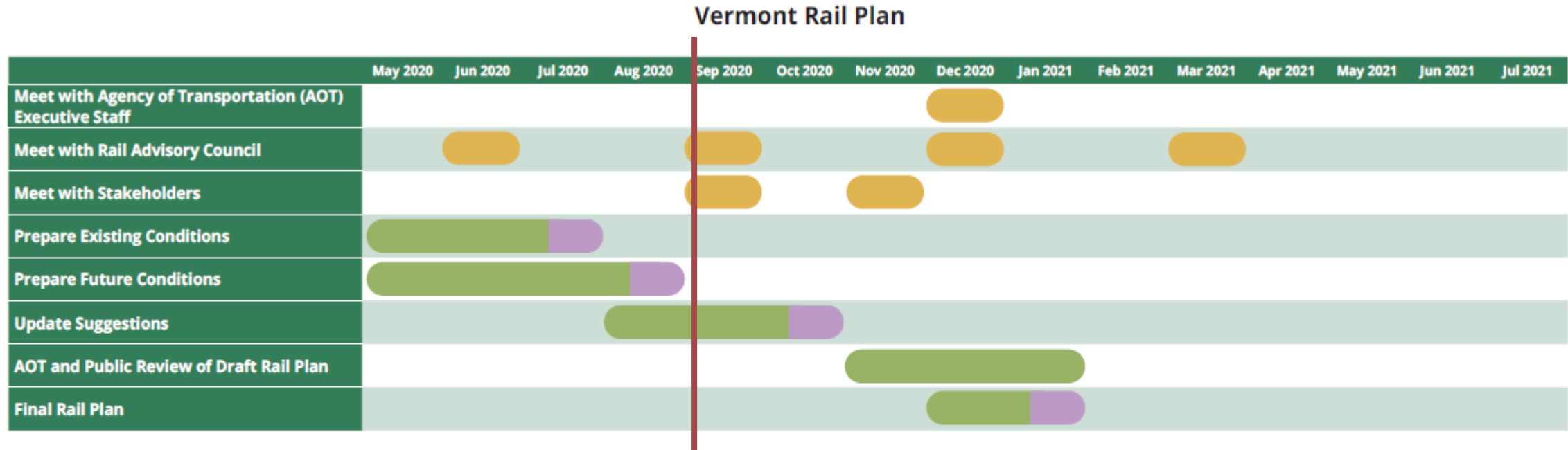
Please describe the route or location

(e.g. a rail facility, road section that crosses a rail line, intermodal site, rail passenger station, or truck movement issue)

Mark it on the map:



Vermont Rail Plan Schedule



Legend

- Indicated work is underway, progress toward a task deliverable
- Outreach activity
- Rail plan deliverable

- Work on the Freight Plan will continue into early summer 2021

Next Steps

- Help publicize Town Hall Meeting #1 - Online
 - October 6, 4:00 - 5:00 PM
 - There will be a 2nd Town Hall Meeting in Nov./Dec. timeframe to review draft recommendations
- Next VRAC Meeting
 - Discuss issues identified in analysis, stakeholder outreach
 - Review pool of potential initiatives
 - Initial prioritization and implementation table

Thank You

For more information on the Vermont Rail Plan Update, visit vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports or contact Zoe Neaderland at Zoe.Neaderland@vermont.gov or (802) 793-2778.

For more information on the Vermont Freight Plan Update, visit vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/freight or contact Dave Pelletier at Dave.Pelletier@vermont.gov or (802) 595-9675.