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State awarded \$2 million for rail safety improvements

February 19, 2019 / Montpelier, Vt. – In partnership with Vermont’s federal delegation, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) announced it has been awarded a \$2,082,519 federal grant for safety improvements along the Vermonter Amtrak service. Funding from the Federal Railroad Administration’s Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Grant Program (CRISI) will be used to correct slopes, repair culverts and install rock fall detection systems along the New England Central Railroad, which hosts the Amtrak service.

The safety improvements will address the underlying conditions that resulted in the 2015 derailment of an Amtrak Vermonter train that caused over \$10 million in injuries and damages. The project will also improve the service’s operating speeds and on-time performance. Since 2015, delays have resulted in 216 hours of annual Amtrak passenger delays and 520 hours of annual freight delays.

“Congress has made a priority of infrastructure investments that improve rail safety, including here in Vermont. This investment will lessen travel times and delays on The Vermonter, a step that is important to our shared goal of growing passenger rail ridership,” said Senator Patrick Leahy, Senator Bernie Sanders and Congressman Peter Welch in a joint statement. The award to Vermont comes from the Fiscal Year 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Act, which included \$592.5 million for CRISI grants, a \$524.5 million increase from fiscal year 2017. Leahy included language in the program ensuring that at least 25 percent of the funds would be allocated to rural areas.

“Amtrak passengers will not only experience faster travel times but also safer and more comfortable travel,” said Governor Phil Scott. “The business community will also benefit from the efficiency gained through these safety enhancements. I’m appreciative of Senator Leahy and our delegation for securing this funding.”

“This project is consistent with our focus on safety and improving our intercity passenger rail services and I am excited to make these important investments in our state’s rail network,” said Transportation Secretary Joe Flynn.

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