

Vermont's Draft State Rail Plan is under review

The Vermont Agency of Transportation has developed a Draft State Rail Plan, updating its 2006 State Rail & Policy Plan.

The plan provides a framework for maintaining and enhancing the state rail system. Almost half the 578-mile, active rail network in Vermont is owned by the state.

All of the lines in the network are used for freight service, with two routes also providing intercity passenger services that connects to Massachusetts, New York and other states.

The State Rail Plan conforms to the Federal Rail Administration's (FRA) requirements for state rail plans specified by the Passenger Rail Investment Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). Under PRIIA, projects must be included in a State Rail Plan to be eligible to receive federal (FRA) funds.

The 2015 State Rail Plan sets goals, objectives and strategies for both passenger and freight rail. Goals include maintaining the State Rail System in a state of good repair and financially sustainable; expanding the system's capacity to accommodate growth for freight, passengers and the economy; improving intermodal connectivity and enhancing safety.

Other state planning efforts and collaborative input from the public and rail stakeholders have informed the development of the plan.

WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

- Inventory of existing rail infrastructure & services
- Analysis of passenger & freight rail use
- Assessment of past & future trends
- Analysis of freight & passenger needs
- Vision, goals & objectives
- Proposed capital plan



Taking Stock

It's good to set goals, but even better to identify measures to see if goals are achieved.

Metrics to evaluate projects based on the plan's goals – such as maintain the system in a state of good repair, support economic development, enhance safety, expand passenger rail - are written into the plan.

Performance standards will help VTrans monitor and assess progress towards meeting its goals for rail.

Vermont Railway hauls freight on the state-owned "CT River Line," a subsidiary of the Washington County Railroad.

A SNAPSHOT ON HOW RAIL INITIATIVES WILL BE PHASED-IN

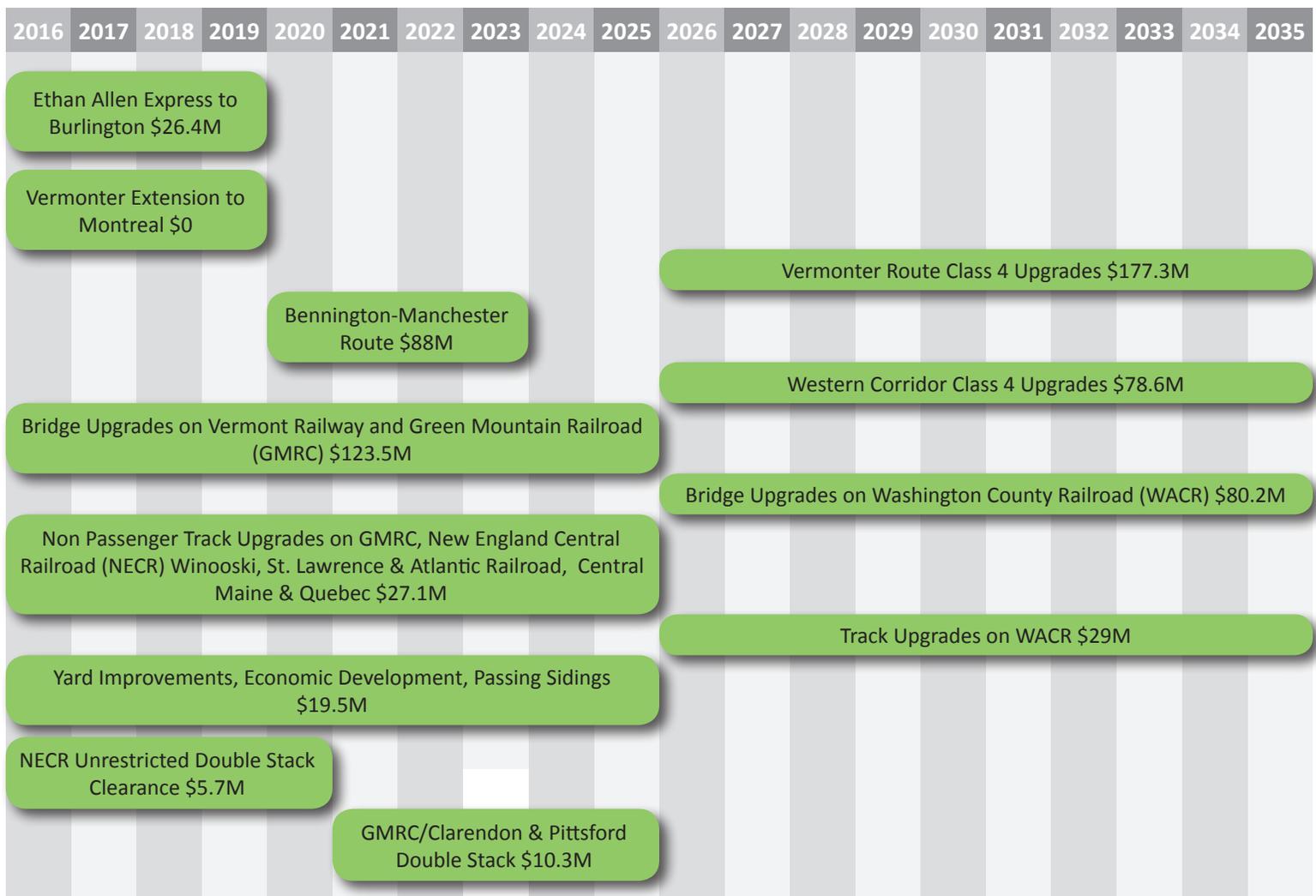
Bringing the rail network into a state of good repair and expanding passenger rail service by increasing the number of trains and routes will be very costly.

The State Rail Plan identified \$370 million in passenger rail needs and \$295 million in freight rail needs, totaling \$665 million. To address these needs, the plan set priorities for projects and projected potential funding levels from state and federal sources.

Since 2002, Vermont has received an average of just over \$15 million annually from the federal government. VTrans

estimates that \$4 million in state funds are available per year for rail capital needs. If this level of support continued over 20 years, a total of \$380 million would be available to invest in the state rail network. Federal funding is not guaranteed and even past funding levels would cover less than 60 percent of identified needs.

In the coming years, the State Rail Plan will provide a framework for investing in and managing rail assets.



The DRAFT State Rail Plan is available at: http://rail.vermont.gov/about_us/reports_plans.

For more information, or to comment on the State Rail Plan, please contact: Costa Pappis, Vermont Agency of Transportation, costa.pappis@state.vt.us, 802-828-5790. Please send all comments by July 31, 2015.