



Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

Secretary Joe Flynn
Vermont Agency of Transportation
1 National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05633

November 19, 2019

Dear Secretary Flynn,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and Department of Public Works Director Chapin Spencer on November 12. I am excited about the return of passenger rail to Burlington and the benefits it will bring to the City and the region. This multi-stakeholder effort has spanned decades, and we are finally on the cusp of restoring this long-envisioned use of the waterfront railroad tracks.

The State has requested that the City indicate its preference for an overnighting location for the Amtrak train. When contemplating the City's preference for an Amtrak overnighting location and related issues, we are focused on the following City interests:

- Returning passenger rail to Burlington;
- Maintaining continuous Bike Path on the waterfront;
- Protecting the vibrant waterfront; and
- Minimizing any negative impacts of the commencement of Amtrak service on Burlington residents and businesses.

At this time, the City needs more information from the Agency of Transportation (VTrans) in order to make a fully informed decision in consideration of these interests. The City requests more detailed information about the following:

1. The reasons for which the Amtrak cannot be accommodated in the Railyard. Vermont Rail System (VRS) and VTrans have stated that the existing Railyard is not an option for overnighting the Amtrak train, and the City needs a better understanding of why this is the case.
2. The feasibility of overnighting and servicing the train in Saint Albans or another location beyond Burlington. If the State believes this option infeasible, the City needs more information about why this is the case.
3. Why a second track is needed between King and College Streets to accommodate the Amtrak train, an understanding of what alternative strategies have been considered, and if there are additional actions that could make such an alternative feasible. The City is specifically interested in understanding why a second track is necessary at this time if Union Station is not selected as the overnighting location and thus Amtrak would only be briefly stopping at Union Station two times a day.
4. The CCRPC report finds that "nitrogen dioxide emissions from the locomotive have the potential to approach or exceed the NAAQS under the 1-hour averaging period" because the

balconies of the Wing Building residences will be less than 50 feet from the train. Does the State believe that this is a concern that will require mitigation, and if so, what are the estimated mitigation costs? Additionally, would mitigation be necessary only if the Amtrak overnighted at Union Station or are the air quality concerns still exist regardless of the overnighting location?

5. Some constituents have expressed concern the construction of a second rail in front of Union Station will lead to additional train building and freight storage in the heart of the waterfront. Does the State believe a significant increase in such activities is likely? As the owner of the rail line in front of Union Station, can the State ensure that this will not happen?

As you know, Burlington residents and businesses are interested in this project. They have asked important questions and voiced concerns. My Administration has been investing significant time providing information on this VTrans project as best we understand it. Moving forward, we request VTrans undertake a robust public communications effort that minimally includes a project website, written quarterly updates, direct outreach to all adjacent waterfront stakeholders, and biannual updates to the City Council Transportation, Energy & Utilities Committee.

Finally, thank you for acknowledging that the State values the waterfront bike path, supports its relocation to the west side of the rail right of way, and is willing to fully consider bike path issues as the State finalizes its decisions and design for a potential second line. The City has engaged an engineering team and is actively working to finalize the bike path's new design. I appreciate the spirit of collaboration of our meeting and your willingness to engage, if necessary, the important design details that will ultimately determine the success of this effort.

Thank you again for these productive discussions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Weinberger', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Miro Weinberger
Mayor