

**VERMONT RAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
DILL BUILDING
2178 AIRPORT ROAD, Rm 135
BARRE, VT 05641
and VIRTUALLY VIA MS TEAMS
November 12, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Carl Fowler
Chris Andreasson
Charles Baker
Charles Hunter (NECR / G+W)
Charlie Moore

ATTENDEES:

Messier, Amy L	Peter Young
Mary Anne Michaels	Preston Bristow
Kilbride, Allyson	Jon Duke
Eleni Churchill	Fitzgerald, Mark
Boomhower, Michele	Charbonneau, Erin
Wells, Kyle	Ostebo, Kurt
Walker, Mark	William White
Clark, Margaret T	Knight, Tom
	Tillberg, David
Wilson, John (Manchester, NH)	Pappis, Costa
Delabruere, Daniel	Jake Twarog
Jim Brogan	cbratton (Guest)
Bannerman, Percy	
Libby, Paul	Neaderland, Zoe
Dejan, Sasa	Max Schindler
Layton, Renee	Ben Heckscher
Nummy, John	Michael Arnold
Sen. Wendy Harrison	Natale, Christopher M
	Ryan, Lucy, Vermont Rail
Richard Rudolph	John Slason, RSG
	Dave Pellitier
Maggie May	Zoe Neaderland
Kevin Chittenden, Amtrak	Collin Smythe

1) Call to Order & Introductions

Dan Delabruere called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM. Introductions were made.

2) Approval of Previous Minutes

Due to lack of Quorum the Minutes of last meeting will need to be approved at next meeting in February.

3) Passenger Topics:

a) Corridor Id update- Sasa Dejan

My name is Sasa. I'm the project manager for rail and aviation. I'll be providing an update on the quarter ID projects. As many of you know, we have two corridor id projects right now. One of them is the Vermonter corridor and the other one is the Green Mountain Corridor.

The Vermonter corridor ID project includes improvements to the existing Vermonter service and the extension of the services to Montreal.

The Green Mountain Corridor ID project includes extending the existing Ethan Allen service from Rutland to Bennington and then Bennington to New York. We are currently in step one of the corridor projects. We've completed the project management plan and it's been accepted by FRA. We have a consultant on board who's currently working on the GAP analysis. Once the GAP analysis is completed and accepted by FRA we can move forward towards the statement of work, the schedule and budget.

Part of the FRA project, there were 64 step one projects that were obligated. Currently, 53 of them have submitted their project management plan, including US, 34 of them have submitted their GAP analysis. 14 of them have submitted their work statement, 12 have submitted the schedule and 11 have submitted their budget.

The question was asked, what is GAP?

Basically, the GAP analysis is where we look at all the previous planning work that was done for a specific corridor and then use that information towards the service development plan, which is Step 2 of this process. That's basically it. Where we completed the PNP, we're working on the GAP analysis. We have a consultant on board that's currently working on that. Any questions?

Dan added, there's different stages as far as the whole corridor ID program, right?

The first part of the scope of work, an inventory of what our services look like and that's where we are.

We have a goal to all done all those steps that Sasha was just talking about by April. That is what would keep us on track with the FRA.

And then once we have a scope of work, then we can move in to start looking at the next phase of the corridor ID program, which is to start evaluating needs. How do we go from where we are now? Documenting everything to what we want it to look like and then we move from.

Question from Carl Fowler, for the second phase of this had a state match, which I believe was about 20%.

That right?

Dan, Phase one is 100% federal, phase two is 90/10 and phase three is 80/20.

Carl, is that subsequent series of phases in fact still fully funded or is that something that's going to be subject to authorization?

Dan, subject to authorization.

b) Ridership Report – Allyson Kilbride

Amtrak ridership report, Allison Kilbride Allison is in the room. Good afternoon, everyone.

Ethan Allen has seen an increase in ridership and revenue for the last three months of the last quarter as compared to last year 's ridership for July. An increase to 360 passengers and a 17% increase in revenue after August's increase of 154 passengers with a 17% increase in revenue. September saw an increase of 25 passengers and an 18% increase in revenue.

Again, that's all compared to the same months of fiscal year 23. We also saw an increase in ridership for our top city pairs, which are Burlington, Rutland, Middlebury, and Vergennes, all going to Penn Station. Castleton saw a decrease of four passengers, so it remained about the same.

On-time performance was at 73% so far for fiscal year 24 as compared to 80% in fiscal year 23 and On-time performance is measured by the number of trains that arrived within 15 minutes of their scheduled arrival time. Performance for September is at 62% compared to 73% last year.

Along the same lines for the Vermonter, we saw ridership in revenue increase in the last three months as compared to fiscal year 24. July increased by 123 passengers, which is a 6% increase in revenue. August increased 1627 to additional passengers with a 15% increase in revenue. For September, ridership increased 1221 passengers with a 7% increase as compared to third quarter of fiscal year 23.

There was an increase in ridership for our top city pairs as well. Brattleboro, White River Junction, Essex, Montpelier and Waterbury to New York. On-time performance is at 77% overall for fiscal year 24 compared to 37% in fiscal year 23 on-time performance for September is at 66% as compared to 69% in September of 2023.

Dan noted that those numbers are a bit skewed because if you look at last year, we had

some flooding damage and some outages and we had a little bit of that this year, but not as significant, thankfully.

Allyson continued: We have been making a lot of efforts to increase ridership and increase awareness of Amtrak and taking the trains. We've been working with Amtrak's marketing team and Vermont's Chief Marketing office and the Department of Tourism. We launched a fall campaign and had six million impressions. 1.3 million people were reached overall, and we had 40,766 trackable website visits, which means people visited the Amtrak website and hopefully booked some tickets. The Volunteer Marketing Advisory Group is also working to come up with tactics for this year.

Thank you to Carl Fowler and our folks from the Volunteer marketing group.

Carl Fowler: Allyson, on the ridership report. It shows that overwhelming dominance for Brattleboro. Is that just Brattleboro for New York? It is that it's not all ridership at that station. It's that Brattleboro to New York is the busiest single station pair. That seems like an incredible drop off for the other stations, but it's just the New York City ridership it's not getting out of Essex going to DC?

Allyson, it is the top city pair combination.

Carl Fowler: Thank you. Nice. Looks like the train is healthy here. Good job, Allyson.

Sen. Wendy Harrison, this question about the ridership and how do we know how it is constrained by the capacity of the trains, are there any of those peaks? Peak trains don't have additional space so that could have been even more.

Dan, so in general the answer is: No, I mean we have our constraints around the holidays. Which I think is probably the only time that we ever have sort of capacity issues. Right now, especially in Vermont, I mean, when you get further South, obviously you get into the higher populated areas. Generally, around the holidays we do have a booked train.

Sen. Wendy Harrison OK. All right. So, that's good to know. And I guess just knowing how many days of the holidays would be helpful at some point. And then the on-time performance, that increase, are you saying the lower on time performance in the previous year was because of flooding and issues that we hoped are not common?

Dan: Right, some of the days the train didn't run at all, which shows a 0 on-time performance, right? Some of the days the train didn't run at all, which shows a 0 on-time performance. So, when the track is out because of flooding, your percentages go way down and then once you get the track back open, generally, the train must go through those flooded areas at a slower speed, which then affects the on-time performance down the line. So, flooding is a big problem for on-time performance. It does take a while to rebound from that.

Not just flooding, but summertime is when track work gets done. Bridge projects get done. Crossing projects get done. So, in summertime, there's generally slow orders put on track that slow the train down just because of construction zones. So yeah, it's just unfortunate in Vermont we have a short construction season. We must pack a lot of stuff in that summertime.

Sen. Wendy Harrison: But it's good to see the improvement obviously. And then just another thing if it's possible to compare our routes to routes in other states, I'd be interested in knowing. That's not for this meeting, but I just think in the future it might be nice. For ridership, primarily.

Dan: We can compare other New England's like the Downeaster or some of the other ones.

Sen. Wendy Harrison: It's great and thanks to the folks who are working on marketing that's terrific because I know we have seen a big increase down here in ridership. So, thank you.

Carl: An issue that is going to impact on us, but it just literally started yesterday. Amtrak is for at least the next two years, and quite possibly as many as four, losing some of its capacity from Long Island into Penn Station through the East River tunnels. Basically, quickly there are four at least to the tunnel. Doors are going to close for reconstruction and it's reducing capacity, this would seem, who cares? We don't go to Long Island, right? The Vermonter traverses Long Island on the Hill Gate Bridge line, coming into Pennsylvania station. And in the case of the Ethan Allen reduced capacity on the Hudson River line means additional pressure on the surviving trains. Amtrak has 13 frequencies a day from New York to Albany. It's lost three of those. So, that is going to put pressure on the remaining trains. This goes, Wendy, to your question about capacity. We don't know yet because it just started.

We do know that Amtrak has not yet been able to find equipment to add cars to the surviving New York Albany trains. What that means is that effectively it was 22% cut in capacity that's going to spread against the remaining trains and that may impact us. It's not something we can do a whole lot about initially, but we need to monitor it closely. Suddenly dropping off in ridership on the Ethan Allen and would not be a surprise to me if in fact it was being pressured by people bumping from other New York markets to Albany trains that aren't running anymore. Vermont Amtrak is allowed to use two of the four tunnels between Long Island and one of the two is going to be closed for reconstruction. The Vermonter could encounter significant delays getting into Penn Station if something goes wrong. If the operational plan works, everything will be fine. But if a certain train is late, there could be significant problems. Again, that just started today. But it is something we should be very much aware of, and I long term hope we will find a way to get Amtrak to move some equipment into the New York North Albany market. So, we might look at, for example, getting one more coach on Ethan Allen, which we could probably use anyway. Is there any information to talk about any of that?

Charles: I don't have any information on whether we could find cars, but we're constrained in the maintenance facility that we cannot service a 6 car, 2 engine train without breaking it up. That's the problem with that. And, of course, that train will now be made up continuously from end to end with two locomotives.

Dan: We won't have a change in Albany anymore. That's the good news. So, we won't be seeing delays in Albany. Not that we've been seeing a tremendous amount, but that will go away during this period.

From Chat: will there be a corresponding schedule change coming to Ethan Allen if there doesn't need to be an engine removal in Albany?

Dan: I would say not right off. We'll have to wait and see what happens there. I would say my initial reaction is I'm not going to ask for one right off, but we may.

c) Montreal Update – Dan

In our last Council meeting I was anticipating an English version of the feasibility study that the Quebec government, their transportation agency was leading. Their transportation agency was leading a feasibility study for the preclearance facility at Montreal station.

I do not have a copy of it before anybody asks me. Here are some of the highlights presented in a zoom meeting:

For those of you who are familiar with the 2014 study, it modeled that but went to the next step. There was a sort of initial general layout that was in that 2014 study. That exact document was in this study is sort of the layout, so that hasn't really changed. The information was given based on that layout on how to get from where we are now to the next step. So, they looked at some real issues like if they were to use that layout, it goes under two buildings and a street. So, what are the challenges? For building that preclearance facility at the track level and then getting the folks through the preclearance facility at the track level up to the concourse level. And when I say challenges, the things they were looking at were that parts of the building are steel and concrete parts. The buildings are wood beam construction. Some of them are slab on grade type construction. All of those were identified in the feasibility study. And then what would happen to get from one level to the other? Poke a hole through the mezzanine level to get upstairs.

Also, they looked at Emergency evacuation. They looked at if this went to construction, where did the construction vehicles come in? Where does the material come from? And these are all high level, just like discussion points. These aren't engineered drawings that were developed with this level. It was, this is what we need to look at to get to an engineer's level drawing looked at. The mezzanine level, there's a couple because there must be some. Stairways and escalators type things figured in will that affect businesses on the concourse level? The answer is yes, there will be some shuffling of or redesign at the concourse level.

To make sure those businesses either move or reconfigure their business to accommodate these small escalators and type things.

Parts of the buildings need to be looked at seismic design. This area is in a seismic zone. So there are parts of the building that have not been renovated in a long time that don't meet the seismic new code, so they're going to have to look at that. They don't think that that's unachievable, but they think that they're going to have to update the building to that code and they narrowed it down from a couple of options. One of the options that they looked at was splitting the design, putting some of it on track level, some of it on the mezzanine level. And I think that that was eliminated early in the analysis. Based on the building configuration and I think it really came back to that, the original layout in the 2014 study still existed as the most viable option. So, if you're familiar with that layout. That's it essentially.

So anyway, questions based on this?

Carl, was there any discussion of funding methodologies or timetables?

Dan, no, we don't have that yet. One of the things we are looking at is putting together the Quebec government and Vermont New York track sort of putting together a little bit of a white paper based on this study to put out. I think that's probably what we'll do next and that should give us some more details, but the good news is I think that that first study was a good one.

Dave Pelletier, Policy and planning section, one item in terms of next steps I was privy to in that meeting was that they did mention mobility, transport, durable mobility transport. They said that they'd be moving into sort of real estate assessment aspect of things now. They were preparing to move into sort of the real estate assessment aspect of it, market assessment and whatnot.

Dan, because it's not only what the building structure looks like, but also ownership of the buildings. Who owns what, like an owner might be at the track level, might be a different owner at the mezzanine level, might be a different owner at the next level, and then you've got these buildings side by side. Then you've got a street, so there's all this ownership that's complex.

4) Freight and Construction Topics

a) CRISI Grant Application update - Dan

Now let's move into freight and construction topics.

So CRISI grants awards came out a month and a half ago or so.

We at VTrans had put in a CRISI application for continuous welded rail between Rutland and

Hoosick New York, which followed along the same corridor as the BUILD grant that we're currently working on. It would have upgraded a lot of the rail to a higher weight rail and continuously welded rail. We were not awarded that. We did submit a letter of support for another CRISI grant in that same category and NECR was awarded theirs. Congratulations.

And I'll let Charles Hunter give us some information about the grant that he was awarded,

Charles, thanks Dan.

This was a combined application between our New England Central Railroad and P&W. P&W indicated the need to be the lead applicant, but both railroads had matching funds. In this we also had some cities that participated in this down in Rhode Island as well for matching funds. There are really three elements in this. The main element is upgrading the Burlington Branch between Essex Junction and Burlington to complete the heavier rail change out the less than 100 LB rail that's still on that line do some tie insurance and this will get it up to Class 2 FRA track standards, which it'll be good for 20 or 25 miles an hour for freight speeds, and it'll get us to 286,000 LB cars. I think there's three people in this room that are probably remember talking about this proud project about 20 years ago, so It's great to see it finally come to fruition. This also completes getting all the NECR up to 286,000 lbs. Track standards from the ocean at New London, CT to the border with Canada. It's been a huge undertaking for literally almost 20 years, but it should be completed next year. So, we appreciate Dan and company supporting the project with US Rhode Island dot supported us on the other end. There's a lot of traffic that flows down the NECR that goes to the Providence of Worcester ran a 50-car train down to the P&W yesterday down the NECR as an example. So, it's an important freight corridor between those two railroads.

Questions about it?

Carl, Is there also money for the mainline north of St. Albans up to the border.

So, no, there is some money for replacing timbers on East Alburg trestle, and there's some work in St. Albans yard to restore some tracks that are out of service for additional capacity. But Carl, the main line north of St. Albans was rehabbed a few years ago with a TIGER grant. It is Class 3.

Viewing a PowerPoint that Charles brought to us here.

Dan was talking about the floods back in the summer. This welded rail train literally showed up the day before the floods, we had over in in the Northeast Kingdom.

The day before the floods, we had over in in the Northeast. So I went over there the night before and stayed in Island Pond to watch them unload it the next day and that got cancelled because we had like 16 wash outs on the North End of the SLR but they were able to get it back together and in pretty short order, and the next day I went back and we started unloading the rail. I was in Island Pond that night at my camp and it was awful. It was a lot of water. I almost got stranded.

This was July the 12th. We had two units on it. It's about 8 miles of welded rail on the train. It was an LB foster train. It was manufactured in Columbia City IN on steel Dynamics rail mill.

It's coming around the curb just north of the station there in Island Pond. Here we are pulling it off. I don't know how many have ever seen how a welded rail train works, but basically you anchor the end of the rail off the back of the train and then the train just with the locomotives on the front pulls away and it just unloads and then you hook up the next train and start over again, and that's called a threader car on the back of the train.

Next one.

Manufacturers stamp from steel dynamics and if you drive over there today, that's what you'll see is the rail laid out can see the joints on the rail that's in the main line there. Once this is installed, there'll be no more joints every 39 feet. We're just waiting for some paperwork to get done with. VTrans and the FRA and then we'll look to install this next year.

How long are those segments?
quarter mile each.

Alright, let's move into other project updates from some Vtrans staff.

b) Project Updates – Paul Libby/Kyle Wells

Paul, Good afternoon. Thanks Dan.

Some highlights talk about some FEMA rail projects as well as the FRA BUILD grant and let those respective project managers tell you what they've been up to.

Now I'll kick it over to Renee.

Renee, Thanks Paul.

My name is Renee Layton, project manager for the rail, and the BUILD grant.

As many of you know, we have an FRA funded build grant with 29 bridges doing upgrades to these bridges. To make them 286K load rates at 40 miles per hour. And it goes all the way from Rutland to North Hoosick.

This is the pre-existing bridge 603 over Courtelle Road and Hoosick NY. That's what it looked like before. We remove the trestle support. We replaced the entire superstructure, the wing walls. We repointed the masonry abutments. We also paved Courtelle Road. Not the entire road, just where we widened the road with the removal of the trestle. We have new abutment seats and backwalls as well on this one.

This is Bridge 6601 over Route 22 in Hoosick, NY. We rehabilitated the abutments, steel members, and we painted vulnerable areas subject to deterioration. This is a ballasted deck. And from what I hear, it's good for maintenance purposes.

Bridge 600. I have a pre-existing photo of Bridge 600 over the Wolf River in Hoosick. And on the next slide you can see we faced the abutments with concrete along with repointing and repairing the stone masonry. We repointed the pier, and we also rehabilitated the protective scour wall at the bottom of the pier. We painted various steel members subject to deterioration, as shown in the bottom right photo, we installed retaining walls on the West approach and rehabbed the existing wing walls.

This is bridge 57.5 in Shaftsbury. We replaced it with a 10 by 10-foot box culvert. You guys already saw some of the construction photos from the last Rail Council meeting, but I wanted to share on the next slide some of the landscape work that we did along the channel.

This is bridge 76 in East Dorset. As you can see, the pre-existing bridge was underwater. On the next slide. We raised the bridge. This was a complete replacement. We have micropiles, new abutments and a new superstructure.

The next going up the tracks, bridge 77. Full replacement, we have brand new H piles in the ground going all the way to bedrock about 85 feet, 90 feet deep to ledge, brand new superstructure. And this one's complete as well.

I have some culverts that are considered bridges. I wanted to share this is bridge 72.7 in Manchester. It's a cattle pass bridge and we replaced it, and I heard that the farmer says that they're already using it. It's good to hear some feedback. Happy property owners.

This is bridge 92 in Wallingford. We replaced it with a 21-foot culvert, precast concrete culvert.

This is bridge 80 in Dorset. The pre-existing photo shows a lot of silt and sediment built up in the culvert. We replaced the culvert, made it bigger and we did a lot of channels work up and down the channel.

This is bridge 58 in Shaftsbury. We replaced this bridge with a big concrete precast culvert. We had some Beaver issues there, but I think they're managed, and this will help.

We still have some bridges and construction that are wrapping up bridge 58.5 replacement. Bridge 88, Bridge 83. We're still wrapping those ones up. They should be done this season.

We also have bridges 62, 67 and 61 that are wrapping up.

Does anybody have any questions?

Dan, I just want to say how amazed I am at how much work Paul and Renee did this summer. We had that 21-day closure. And you saw how much work was done. I mean, these pictures don't do it justice to how much work done this summer. I just can't be prouder

of my team. I can't be prouder of what happened this summer and it couldn't have happened without the cooperation of both VRS and NECR.

c) Storm Damage update – Kyle Wells

Kyle: My name is Kyle Wells. I work in the Rail and Aviation Bureau as a project manager, and today I'm going to talk about the older storms, disaster 4330 and disaster 4445 and just a little tidbit, 4330 is from July of 2017, 4445 is from May of 2019.

Whenever the snow melts and May and June come around, we tend to get a lot of water. Luckily, we're able to get these projects underway and repaired this summer and I get to share that with you guys in a few minutes.

This is a project on the Vermont Railway in Wallingford, Vt. This is a disaster, 4330 that I talked about a couple minutes ago and we had a lot of hydraulic analyses done here and there's only a couple very undersized. CMP, (corrugated metal pipe) culverts that are in this location and as you can see here. This is ECI, our awarded contractor, putting in a precast box to meet our hydraulic standards. In the picture on the left and then if the in the picture on the right, you can see we've armored the swale here. That ditch line sees a lot of running water year-round. So, we had that still in mind and lined with stone rip rap.

Jumping down to Shaftsbury, Vermont. Same disaster, 4330. Not the greatest photo here, but this is kind of the best I had to show you guys what was going on. There was a cast iron pipe underneath the railroad here. When I first went out there to identify the damage from the storm, all I could see was bubbling water out of the ground. After permitting and lots of work with FEMA we obtained some bids. We awarded it to the contractor ECI, and they proposed to replace the pipe rather than trying to see if it was salvageable to clean it out. Replacing the pipe was less money than cleaning it. FEMA agreed to that and we ended up saving the State money and getting a new culvert put in there instead of just cleaning out the old cast iron ones. I feel like that was a win. This project also involved some track work.

A few other things up and down the track there. Jumping onto a site in Dorset, Vt this is the newer storm in 2019, still 4445. We are replacing a culvert that was severely undersized and doing some more drainage at this site and just downstream of here is a is an old historic sluice way. If you guys are ever down in Dorset, go look. There's a little viewing area, but it's kind of neat historically, but this will help increase the flow and help it from flooding and over topping the tracks as much during these high-water events, all the precast pieces you can see on the right and were installed.

We had a shutdown in Danby under the same disaster 4445 and temporarily the railroad helped us out and put in two culverts to get us by for a few years. The scope of this work was to replace everything altogether with precast box culvert that was sized accordingly. You can see the high rail equipment out here because we're in a section of rail where there's not really a lot of crossings for upgrade work for access to the site.

Here we are on the Washington County Railroad, Connecticut River line. And this project's from 4330 disaster and the project involved a farm crossing that had a culvert washout. We replaced that with a precast structure, and we've also upgraded the crossing to be safer for the farm equipment that goes across it.

Here's a site just north of there. This is probably one of my favorite spots that we worked on this summer. ECI was the award contractor. We were able to remove a problem area on the road where people had been dumping garbage off the side of the road and there's an old pull-off there and the slope was steep down to the tracks. We're able to remove the pull off and armor that embankment and fix a drainage problem in the same area.

This is not a FEMA repair. This is another rehab we did with FHWA freight funds. Bridge 304 in Montpelier next to Shaw's is the bridge we're looking at here. We did a lot of rehabilitation of steel components, new expansion bearings and we also prevented some additional rust. This is an old Pin Bridge, so we're trying to prolong the life as long as we can.

This year we had 113 sites in total. We had two storms. They both hit in July and FEMA declared them as 4810 and 4826. 100 sites were from the early storm, 13 sites from the later storm. A huge thanks to VRS. They were the prime contractor hired to do these repairs this year. Lot of work the sites that are still under construction. There's one large culvert replacement project. The culvert is in. It's 12-foot diameter. A stone arch was blown out during the storm, and it was much smaller than 12-foot diameter. In our hydraulic analysis it was determined we should put a 12-foot in. So, there's some final work being done up at that site.

There are about five to six debris removal sites still where material was bound up on our bridges. And there's a few minor little repairs here and there, up and down the tracks that we just need to address.

Two events, but not as large as last year's, but just a lot of work taking place and that we want to share with everyone.

5) Operation Lifesaver Updates – Allyson Kilbride

I attended the state coordinator orientation in DC in September. That's for all new state coordinators it's put on by the national Operation Lifesaver Office. I had a lot of these pieces and that training really put everything together for me. I think that was a great experience.

I've had presentations with 582 people so far this year and we've reached a couple of 1000 is a safe estimate for our community events.

Champlain Valley Fair from August 23rd through September 1st, we saw between 2-3

hundred visitors a day at our table. We were set up next to the model trains, so we had folks there that were already interested in trains, and I think that helped a lot. A huge thank you goes out to our board and our volunteers for that. That was a very hectic 10 days, and I think we did a good job there.

We also participated in "See tracks, Think Train" Week, which was at the end of September. We did a lot of social media blasts. I set up at a few stations. We had a few volunteers set up at stations and we tried to reach as many folks as we could.

Still have ongoing trespassing issues. Mainly near stations. Amtrak PD is aware. The property managers and station hosts are also aware, so we're trying to get a handle on that, keeping folks safe.

The mobile message board was at six different locations this year. It's currently at Bemis Rd. in Vernon. There was a tragedy there in 2012 and in 2023. That board will be picked up probably this week or next to be put up and safe for the winter.

And just to plug social media quickly, we do have Instagram it's:

[@OperationLifesaverofVermont](#), Facebook; [Operation Lifesaver](#) and an X profile: [Lifesaver Vermont](#).

6) Statewide Rail Plan – Zoe Neaderland (AOT) and John Slason (RSG, Inc)

This is an update of the Safety protocol plan. Why are we updating the state rail plan. And why is a state rail plan important for us to understand what is happening with rail overall, what are the trends that are affecting Vermont? What are our needs? Are our issues? Where do we want to go in the future among us? Like us generally in the room and online and then broader, we need to not just speak to each other but speak more broadly with the stakeholders and rest of the residents and employers of the state and people who use our track and facilities.

In the presentation that will follow, I credit John for the flow charts that look good, and you can look at me for the bold, italicized, highlighted questions to you. But I really want input from you folks, so with that, I'd like to introduce John Slason from RSG.

John, Thanks Zoe.

We're at this stage where we want to come to you all to add some important information. Help us ground for some of the key aspects of this plan, which is intended to align Vermont initiatives as well as federal initiatives. And so, we can be aligned so that we can apply for all those grants that we're seeing. The great work manifests here.

To give a very brief update, because we want to have time for Q&A is that we've been updating the existing conditions. Thanks to Allison and David and the mapping team, we're collecting a lot of information on the passenger data, the station data on the physical

attributes, ADA access. We're working with Charles as well as VRS confirming whether we have the rail condition correctly and documenting that all into the report with the height and weight limitations. Clearly there's some active work being done on the bridges, so we want to try to keep this ongoing and with real time updating and making sure that's reflected in the plan. David's doing a great job keeping the consultant team informed as soon as VTrans has the updated information.

We're working with Allyson again on safety data. The quiet zones, Operation lifesaver etcetera, commodity flows are something that we documented last time not knowing. New information there other than trying to triangulate work with shippers and trying to get a sense of are the commodity flows realistic, what we're seeing on the ground is what we're matching from the big national data sets that we're that we're querying. Some of the topics that we're focusing on, ridership and the passenger.

We have signed an agreement with Amtrak, so we have some of the proprietary passenger data so that we're able to do the forecasting and then we'll talk about some of the other Vermont topics, resiliency, climate and equity. On some upcoming slides, we just completed our first public meeting. That was a couple weeks ago up in St. Albans. We had great feedback during the meeting, so that's what is kind of grounding us now on the next steps as we move toward collecting additional feedback from you all and the wider public. And we're still carrying out some interviews. Some of you have already been interviewed, and then we'll be doing that over the next couple of weeks.

You have access after this to the PowerPoint slides. I would really encourage you to click on the YouTube link. There is probably nothing in there that none of you know don't know in this room. But it'd be great to share outward and across Vermont. You'll recognize two of the hosts. They are with our policy and planning team, and they really introduce rail and Vermont, it's under 5 minutes, so that's even better, right?

The other link, the mapping and feedback, is something that I want to make sure we draw attention to. This is a link that is going to the live online mapping section that we have. This will be the ongoing map that will display rail data for Vermont. At this moment in time, there's a component of that website that has the comment tool and that's where for the next three weeks or so, we're going to keep live as we want to ask the public at large. Please submit your comments through that portal. Any of your comments that you collect today or at any other meetings will also be obtained and recorded. But the benefit of that little tool is that it gets a spot on a map, and you can say that location is something of concern or something of note, or if you want to flag something, just generally have a place to put it. We encourage people to sign up if you scroll down on that comment. You can put your e-mail in whether you want to sign up for the next updates as the plan evolves.

Please send it out to any of your emails, websites, whatever it might be that can get the word out. Maybe Allyson, you can put a plug on social media as well.

The link for this is on the Vtrans website under VTrans Rail. You'll get to that page and that page has all of these.

Zoe just pointed out the next phases of this plan on how we want to collect information. That the end goal is that we're trying to come up with a set of recommendations and to align our state and federal actions. This plan is based on that previous plan, we're going to mine the previous initiatives, extract any of those that have already been completed and then we're going to add to that new initiative based on feedback. There's a climate action plan that's being updated. There's a statewide public transit plan being updated, and there's some regional plans being produced. So, all of those are coming up with new ideas, new initiatives that we want to integrate in this rail plan. From all data obtained we develop a list, and we say potential priorities because in no way are we committed or wedded to these things as we start screening them. We need to understand how practical. How can we get behind these? So after we do those working group meetings with our with the rail Plan Working Group, we are going to be prepared to come back to you all. And during the second public meeting, most likely this is going to be in that January and February time frame when you all meet again and we plan on a public meeting sometime in that early February time frame as well. This coincides around that early February period.

It was decided that an email will be sent to the VRAC members with some dates and information to see who would be available for the subcommittee.

The rest of the slide presentation was to show how all the information collected would be analyzed for priority.

7) Public Input

Not seeing any further comments.

8) Next Scheduled Meeting – Tuesday, February 11, 2025

9) Adjournment, 2:50 PM