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

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission TAC – September 1, 2020

VT RAIL PLAN & VT FREIGHT PLAN UPDATE
Background & Goals

- FRA requires a State Rail Plan at minimum every 4 years to remain eligible for certain types of rail grants
- FHWA requires a State Freight Plan every 5 years in order to obligate Freight Formula funds
- Update of 2015 Rail Plan will include Freight/Intercity passenger rail service
- Update of 2012 Freight Plan will cover all modes: rail, highway, air, & water

**RPC Role:**
- Provide input on regional/local needs and ideas
- Help expand public outreach
Rail Plan & Freight Plan Overlaps

Although two separate planning efforts, the Freight and Rail Plans share common tasks and work products.
2015 Rail Plan Goals

- Maintain existing system (State of Good Repair)
- Expand capacity to accommodate growth
- Expand rail system use (freight and passenger)
- Financial sustainability
- Improve intermodal connectivity
- Improve system to support economic development
- Enhance safety

- 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](https://vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports)
- Freight Plan: [https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/freight](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

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)
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 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.
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

VT RAIL PLAN & VT FREIGHT PLAN UPDATE 9/1/2020
Notable System Changes & Initiatives

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

At the regional/local level, what is or could be done to support rail-related businesses (both existing and potential future)?

58% of all freight rail tons are moved through Vermont (and likely to grow). How do we think and speak about this?

What are the top local/regional concerns for the intercity passenger and freight rail networks?
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/PRIIA measurements

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 (Progress made south of WRJ)
- Remove all obstructions to allow unrestricted double-stack clearance
We are considering these measures in relation to other efforts.

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

- **Vision and Goals**
  - Review vision and specific goals for the rail system
  - Overall socio-economic conditions
  - Commodity flows
  - Passenger ridership

- **Existing Conditions**
  - State of System
  - Overall socio-economic background

- **Trends Analysis**
  - Outstanding from 2015 Rail Plan
  - New initiatives

- **Initiative Ideas**
  - How do we decide which initiatives to pursue?
Passenger Rail Forecasting

- Forecast Horizon: 20 years

Background Factors
- Economic Trends
- Demographic Trends
- COVID-19 Impacts

Committed Service Improvements

Exploration of Potential Recommendations
Process to Evaluate Potential Initiatives

1. Rail goals consistent with other State goals
2. Criteria to evaluate pool of initiatives consistent with Vermont Project Selection and Prioritization Process (VPSP2)
3. Table of potential reasonable initiatives based on 2015 Plan, updated analysis, & outreach
4. Analysis using criteria & discussion
5. Draft short set of recommendations for second round of outreach
Online Web Map

- **Link:**
  https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/eb1c30b5bace49fd8f36d4e8bcab89f1/page/page_1/?views=view_10

- **Purpose:**
  - Collect stakeholder input on issues and potential initiatives
  - Provide valuable information

- **What would be of most interest to RPC members?**
  - Rail-related initiatives and status
  - Vertical clearance issues
  - Transload locations
  - Amtrak station ADA features
  - Freight-related employment data
  - Other?

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**Update of Vermont Rail Plan and Vermont Freight Plan**

- **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:**

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**8/1/2020**
Vermont Rail Plan Schedule

Vermont Rail Plan

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Legend
- Green: Indicated work is underway, progress toward a task deliverable
- Orange: Outreach activity
- Purple: Rail plan deliverable

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9/1/2020
Action Request

• Help publicize Town Hall Meeting #1 - Online
  • October 6, 4:00 - 5:00 PM

• There will be a second round of outreach and a 2nd Town Hall Meeting later this year on draft recommendations
  • Does the TAC want a briefing at that point?
  • Will ask for help in publicizing Town Hall Meeting #2
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.