Update of Rail Plan

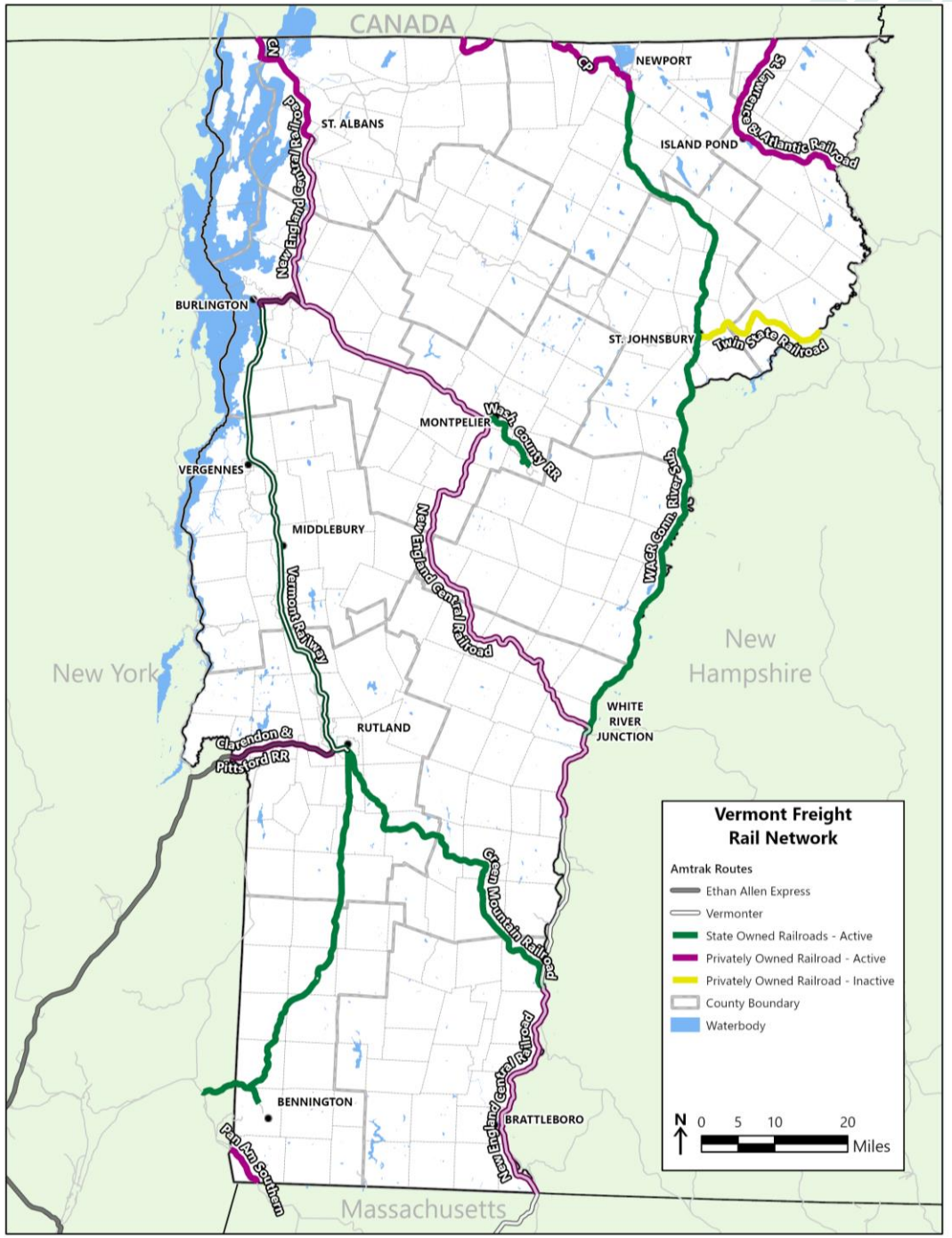
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

Transportation Advisory Committee

November 5, 2024

Importance of Rail in Vermont

- …although CCRPC TAC members probably already know!
- Nearly 580 miles of active rail lines, just under 300 miles owned by State
- The rail system carried approximately 2 million tons of freight in 2023
- Vermonter and the Ethan Allen Express Amtrak services
- Approximately 95,000 passengers board or detrain at Vermont stations each year, increasing after Burlington extension



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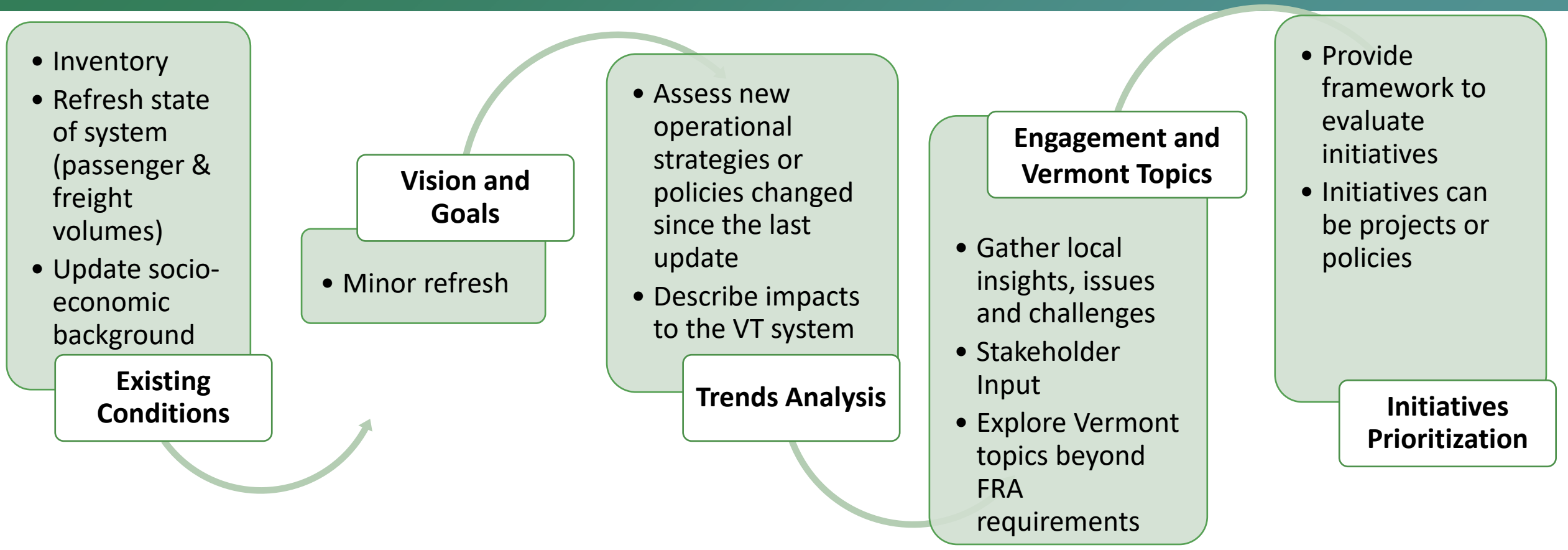
2025 Rail Plan Update Overview



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Vermont Topics

- -Resilience
- -Safety
- -Climate Impacts
- -Equity

Resilience

- Expansion of highways Transportation Resilience Planning Tool (TRPT) vulnerability concepts to rail
- Results to be tested and used in Rail Plan

Maintaining & Improving Safety

1. Maintain and improve rail infrastructure
2. Educate everyone
3. Train first responders
4. Exercise skills together
5. Discuss concerns, opportunities, and context

OPERATION LIFESAVER®
Rail Safety Education

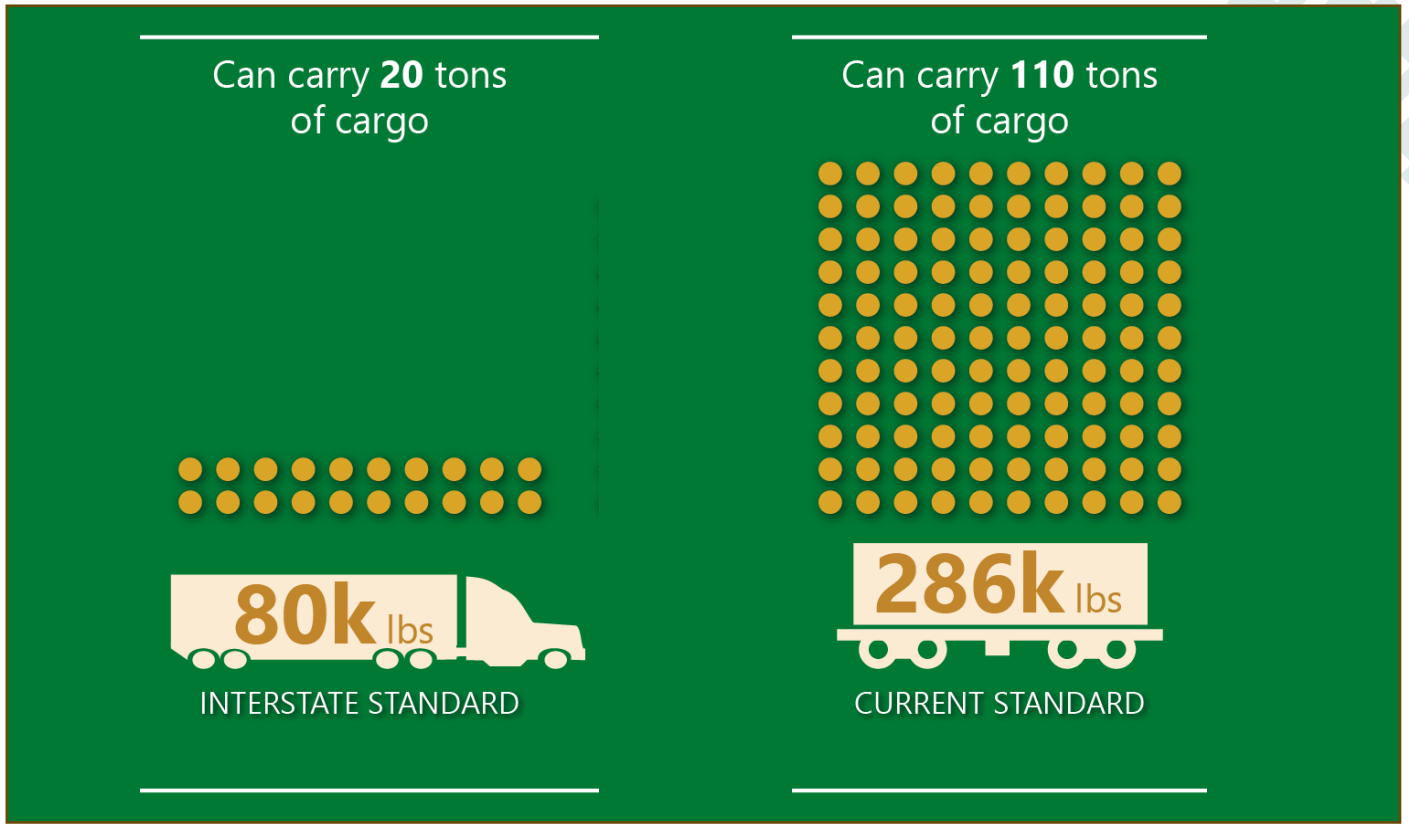
FRA REPORTABLE RAILROAD INCIDENTS 2010 – 2019 IN VERMONT

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Incidents	**20**	**19**	**21**	**26**	**29**	**34**	**32**	**32**	**28**	**30**
Deaths	1	0	1	2	1	5	1	1	0	2
Injuries	15	17	18	21	26	40	28	24	22	22
Train Incidents	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**0**	**3**	**3**	**4**
Deaths	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Injuries	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0
Highway-Rail Incidents	**4**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**4**	**6**	**4**	**6**
Deaths	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Injuries	2	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	2
Other Incidents	**13**	**15**	**18**	**21**	**25**	**30**	**28**	**23**	**21**	**20**
Deaths	0	0	0	2	1	5	1	0	0	0
Injuries	13	15	18	19	24	27	27	23	21	20

Climate Impacts

In an integrated transportation system

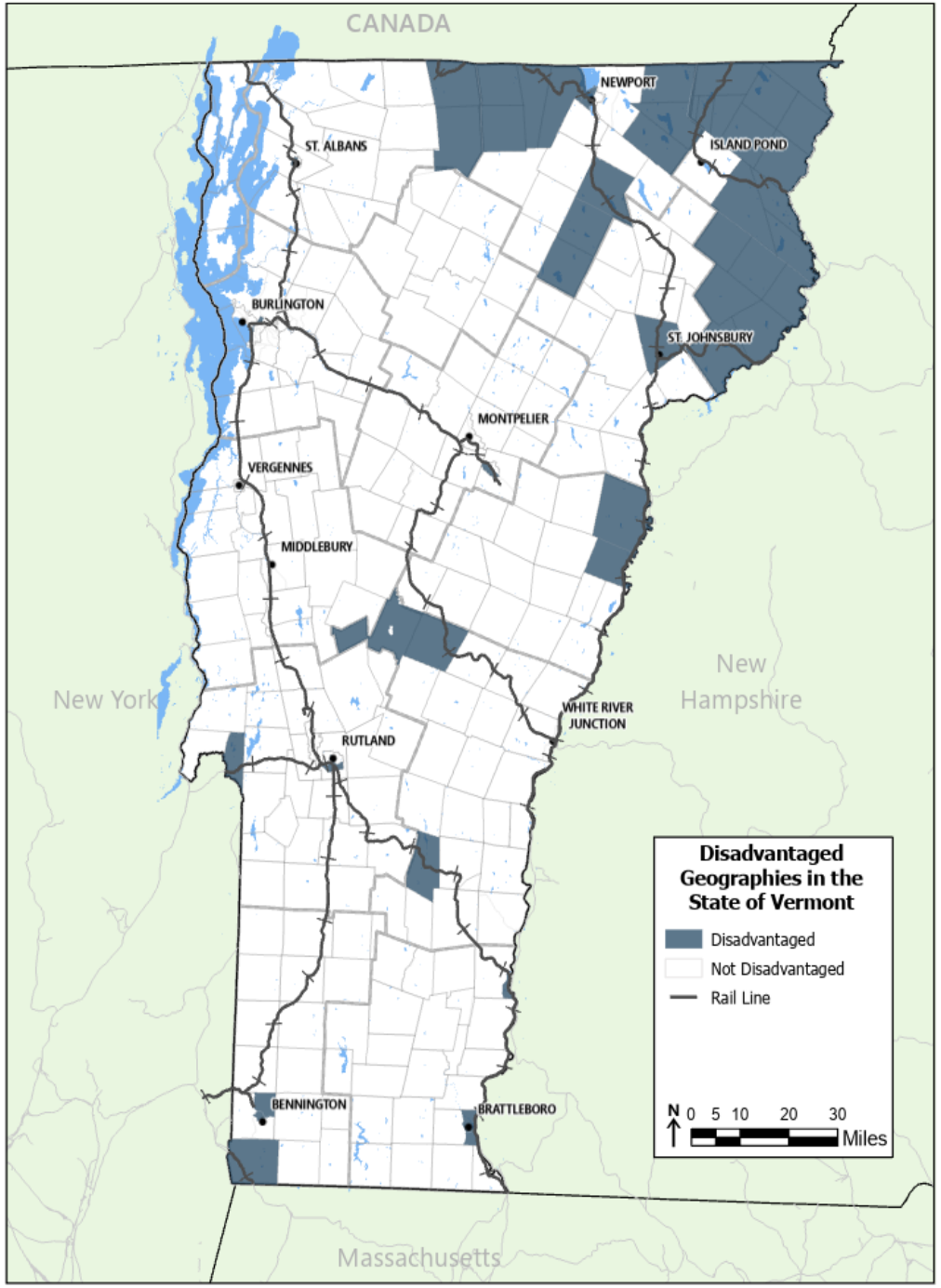
- Freight trains can reduce climate impacts as well as traffic and wear on roads
- Intercity passenger rail is a lower climate impact alternative to driving or flying



AMTRAK IS 46 PERCENT MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT THAN TRAVELING BY CAR AND 34 PERCENT MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT THAN DOMESTIC AIR TRAVEL ON A PER-PASSENGER-MILE BASIS.

Incorporating More Equity

- Describe historical burdens communities have had associated with rail and freight activities
- Mapping to illustrate relationship between rail and freight assets and socio-demographic data
- **Access to Amtrak stations**
- Consider equity in the needs and prioritization of initiatives



Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) Disadvantaged Geographies

Goals

2021 Rail Plan Goals

- Maintain existing system (State of Good Repair)
- Expand capacity to accommodate growth
- Increase rail system use (freight & passenger)
- Fund the rail system adequately and sustainably
- Improve intermodal connectivity (freight & passenger)
- Act on opportunities for ancillary economic development
- Enhance safety, security & resiliency

Requesting Your Comments

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Status of 2021 First Priority Capital Initiatives

Priority Recommendation	Status
Burlington Rail Yard Enterprise project	Ongoing
Seek grants and innovative funding approaches for freight and passenger rail	Ongoing
Work to reduce causes of delay within and beyond Vermont's borders	Ongoing
Increase resilience of rail system	Ongoing
Passenger Rail Station Improvements	Active
VTR track upgrade between Manchester and Rutland	Active
GMRC Bridges and Track Upgrades	Active
WACR Connecticut River Bridges and Track Upgrades	Active
Upgrade WACR Montpelier & Barre Sub. Bridges and Track	Active

All 2021 Priority Initiatives

First Priority

- Track and respond to COVID-related changes regarding impacts on the passenger and freight rail system, including marketing Amtrak, particularly as service is restarted.
- **Extend Vermonter to Montreal.**
- Upgrade all State-owned freight rail lines to efficiently be able to handle the industry-standard freight railcar weight of 286,000 lbs. (286k).
- **Passenger rail station Improvements.**
- Phased deployment of gates/flashers at existing and planned Amtrak public road grade crossings.

Second Priority

- **Burlington Rail Yard Enterprise project.**
- **Seek grants and innovative funding approaches for freight and passenger rail.**
- GMRC Bridges and Track Upgrades.
- WACR Connecticut River Bridges and Track Upgrades.
- WACR Montpelier & Barre Sub. Bridges and Track Upgrades.
- Maintain and improve connectivity to regional and Class I railroads.
- **Improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian connections to Amtrak trains. Improve wayfinding.**
- **Work to reduce causes of delay to Ethan Allen Express and Vermonter service within and beyond Vermont's borders.**
- Maintain State-owned freight trackage at FRA Track Class 2 or better and state-owned passenger rail trackage at Class 4 or better where viable based on geography.
- **Publicize existing voluntary efforts of railroads and encourage "freight as a good neighbor" (NCHRP Syntheses 320) while respecting rail's exemptions from local control.**

Third Priority

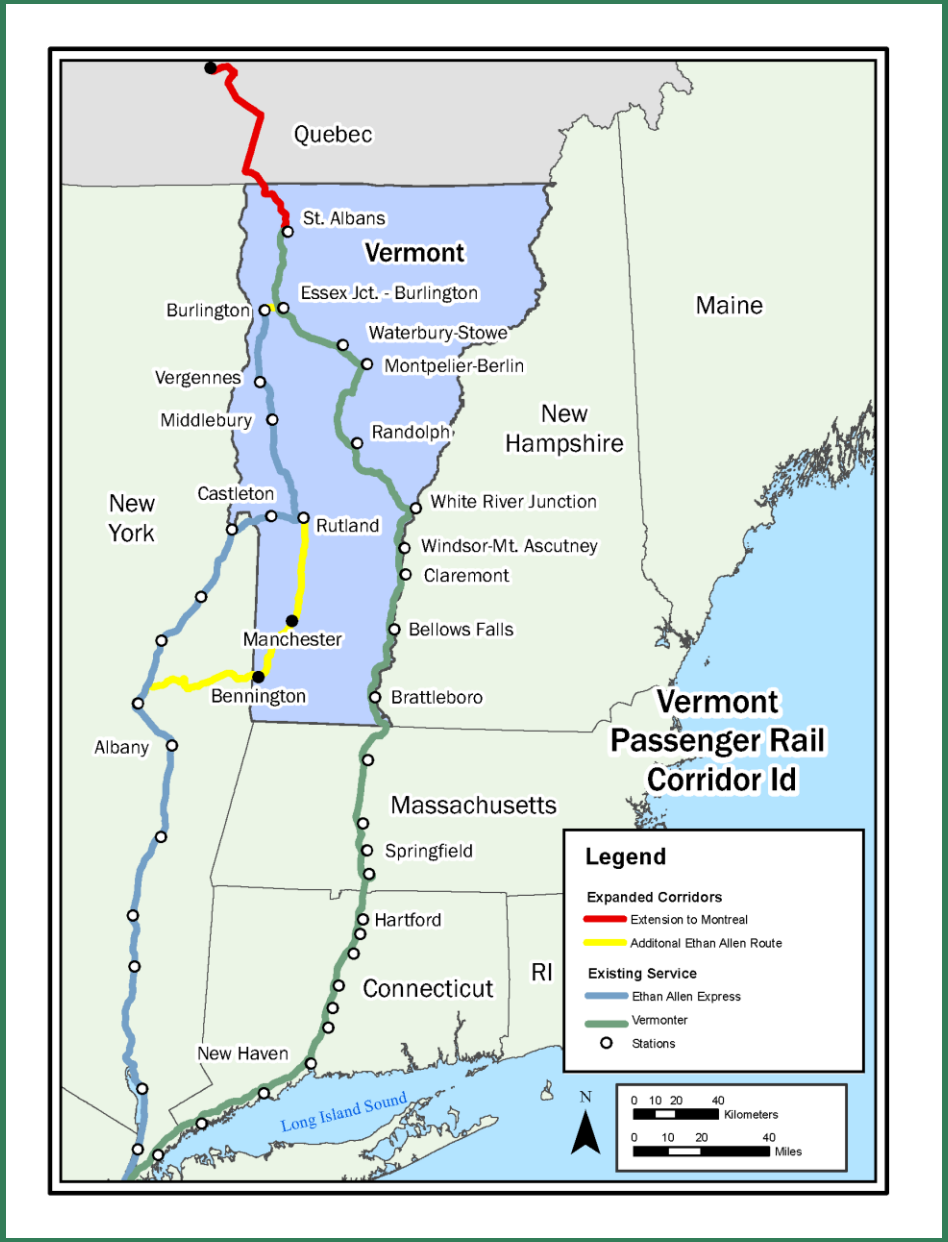
- **Preserve and fully use industrial land parcels with access to rail sidings as well as the rail infrastructure that provides the access.**
- Improve track on Western Corridor between Rutland and Manchester.
- Add passenger service on the Albany-Bennington-Burlington to supplement Ethan Allen Express service
- **Improve track on NECR between Burlington and Essex Junction.**
- **Ethan Allen Express Amtrak service extension to link with Vermonter at Essex Junction.**
- Publicize intermodal options to shippers, including how to use carload and intermodal freight rail. Facilitate development of additional freight transload locations in or near Vermont.
- Maintain and modernize freight rail yards such as NECR and CP Yards.
- **Increase resilience of rail system** to make critical infrastructure more resilient now and to prepare for increasing storm severity.

Review or Add Initiatives

Please visit vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports

- Introductory materials, including short videos
- Interactive webtool for exploring and commenting
- 2021 Range of Potential Initiatives in Meeting Materials as starting point
- And more!

Related Rail Planning: -Corridor Identification and Development (ID)



Three-Step Process

- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) accepted Vermonter and "Green Mountain" Corridors into Step 1
- Work getting underway with goal of completing Step 1 this spring
- Intention to move promptly into Step 2 (assuming FRA grant funds)

Storymap including more details about VT's Corridors: [CORRIDOR IDENTIFICATION & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM]

What Happens Next—Steps 1, 2, and 3

Grant	Step 1: Scoping	Step 2: Service Development Plan	Step 3: Preliminary Engineering / NEPA
Funding	$500k / 0% match	$X / 10% match *($X determined during Step 1)*	$X / 20% match *($X determined during Step 2)*
Scope	• Using SDP SOW framework, **sponsor develops scope, schedule, and budget for Corridor SDP**, accounting for work ongoing and/or undertaken to date	• Sponsor **develops a service development plan** in accordance with Corridor SOW and in coordination with FRA	• In coordination with FRA, sponsor completes **preliminary engineering** for capital projects • Sponsor completes **environmental review in coordination with FRA** for capital projects
Notes	• After kick-off meeting, **FRA will review work undertaken to date** • **Step 1 grant deliverable is SDP SOW** to include corridor-specific scope, schedule, and budget for service development planning	• Final service development plan includes a **Capital Project Inventory** as part of the **Phased Implementation Plan** • If readiness criteria are met, capital projects identified in **SDP may be advanced into Step 3** Project Development, at FRA's discretion and subject to funding availability	• Capital projects that complete Step 3 will move to **Project Pipeline** and may be prioritized for funding under Fed-State Partnership Program

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Railroad Administration

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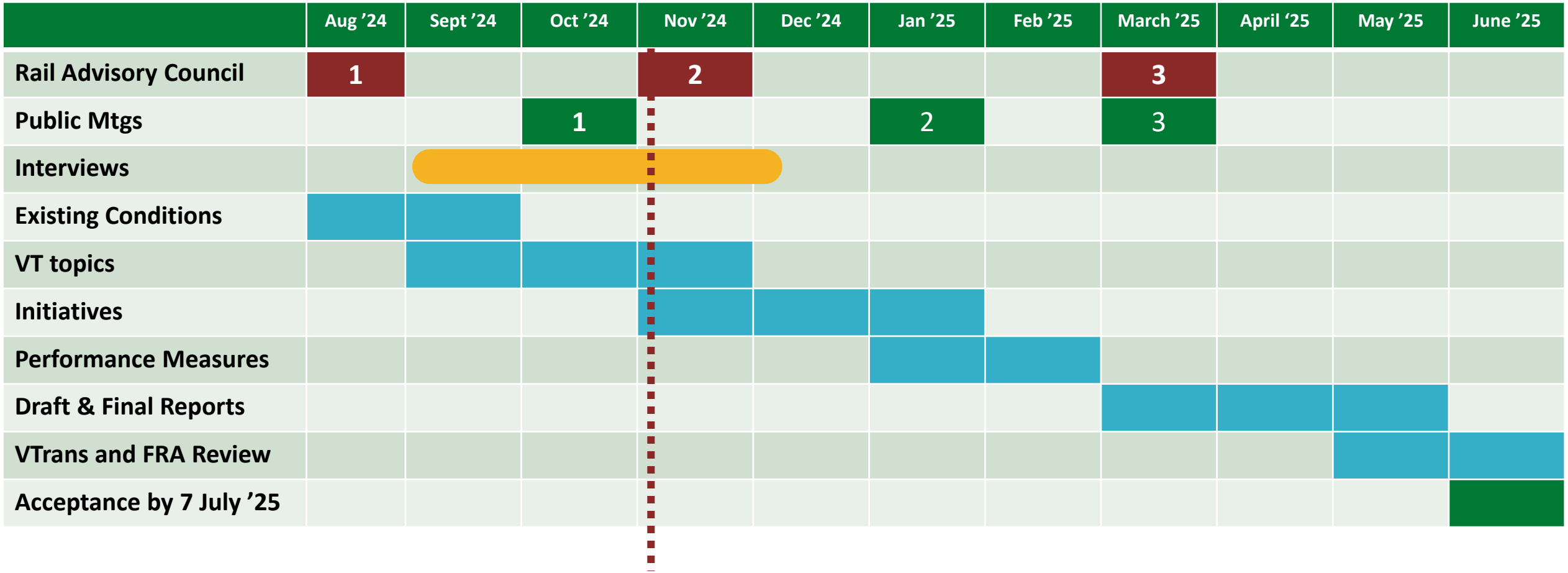
Rail Plan—Schedule Overview



Thank You!

Comments or Questions?

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