Updating the Vermont Rail Plan & Vermont Freight Plan

Chittenden County Regional Plannin
Commission (CCRPC)
Transportation Advisory Committee
December 2, 2025

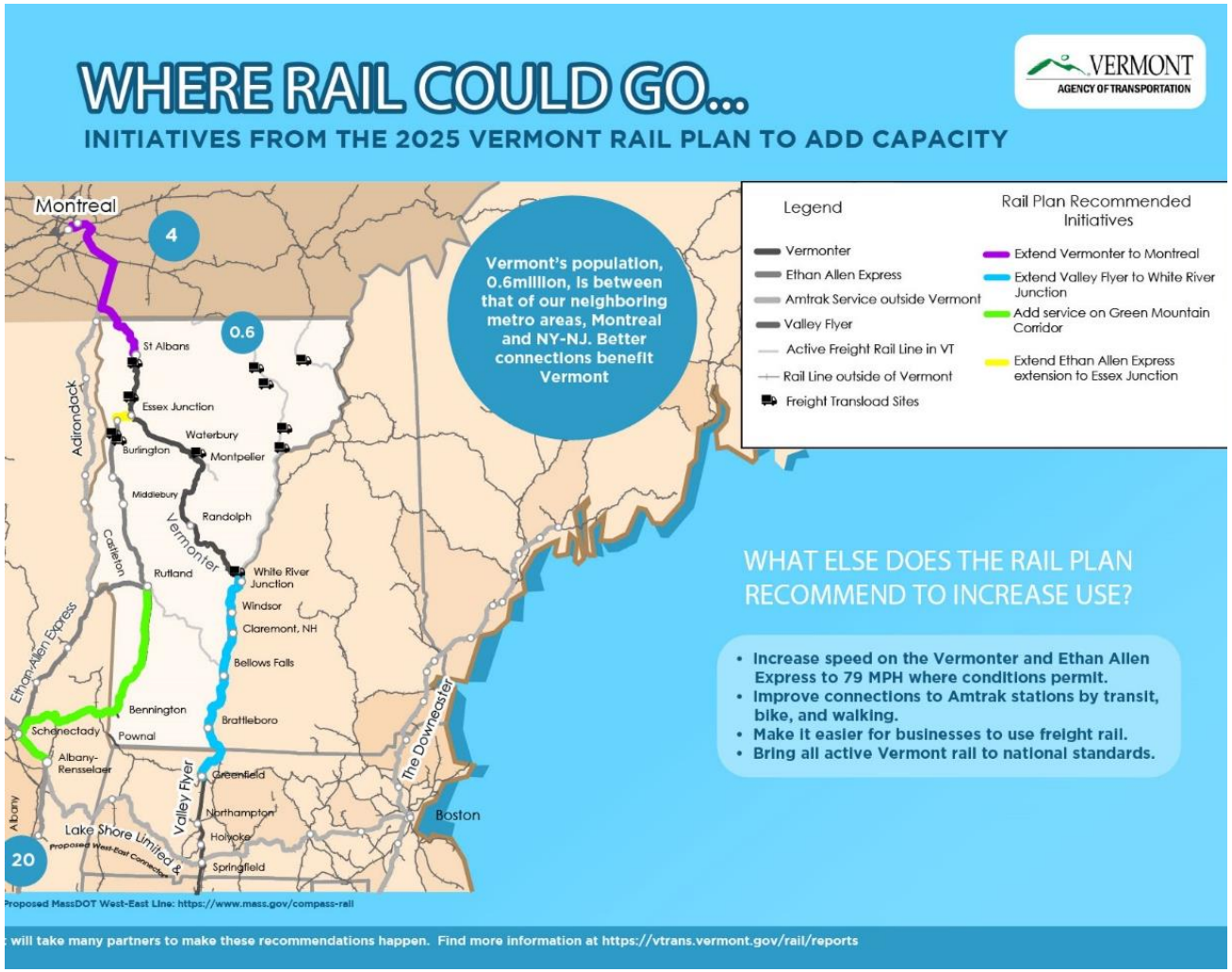
Photo courtesy of Couture Trucking

Vermont Rail Plan

Thank you to participants in the update!

Sign-off or comments expected from FRA in coming weeks.

Rail Plan materials posted at **https://vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports**



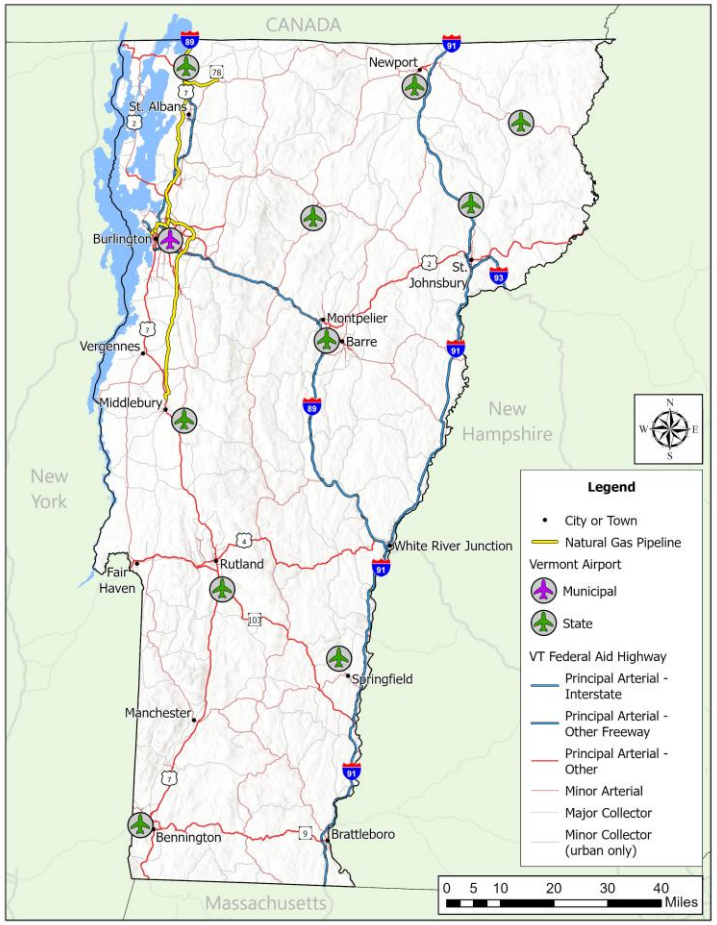
Please share the two-page Executive Summary

What is the Vermont Freight Plan

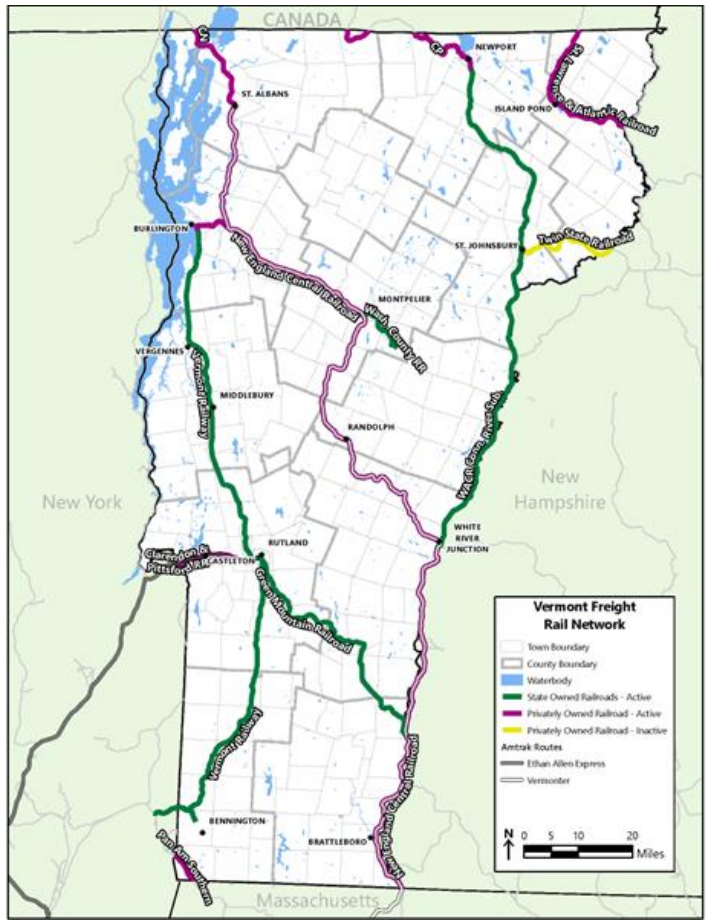
- Good planning makes for an efficient freight system for Vermont; the Freight Plan is more of a high-level policy document than the Rail Plan
- FHWA requires a State Freight Plan every five years to obligate Freight Formula funds
- State Freight Plans must include:
  - Freight trends, needs, and issues
  - Freight policies, strategies and performance measures
  - How innovative technologies are being considered
  - Congestion, delay, mobility, and deterioration issues
  - General Freight Investment Plan
  - Engage stakeholders and Freight Plan Advisory Committee

Vermont's Highways & Airports; Freight Rail

Airports and Federal Aid System



Rail Freight Network



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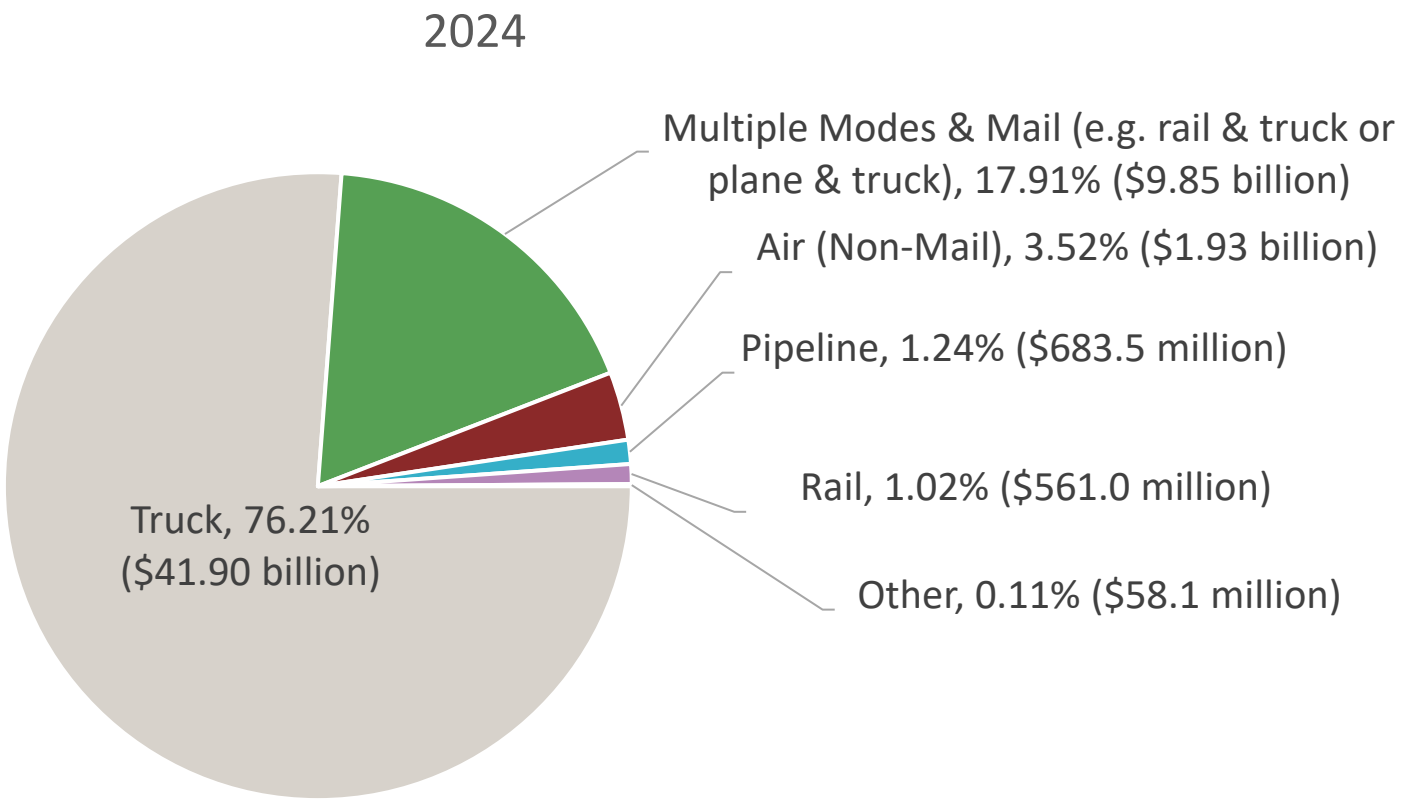
How Freight Moves



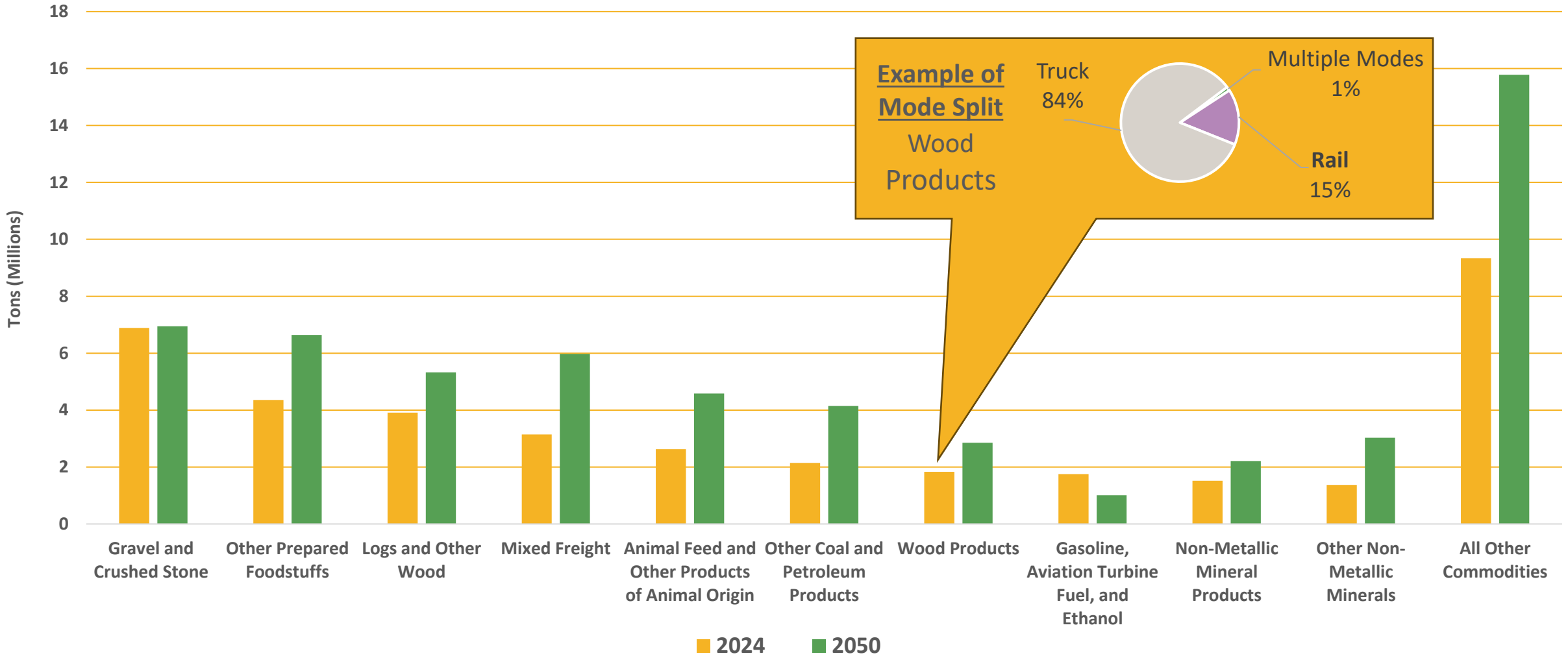
Freight by Mode by <u>VALUE</u>
(in 2017 dollars)

- Trains excel at moving heavy goods long distances
- Planes excel at moving high-value, lightweight goods quickly
- Trucks range from long-distance container haulers to “last-mile” delivery to store or home

Use each mode for what it does best and connect them efficiently

Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics FAF5

Top Commodities by WEIGHT



Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics FAF5

Draft Revised Goals

1. Maintain highway, rail, aviation, pipeline, and water transportation infrastructure in a **state of good repair** to carry freight.

2. Improve the **safety, security, reliability, resilience, and sustainability** of the freight system.

3. Advance **freight system performance** by modernizing infrastructure and operations while building the workforce of the future.

4. Increase **freight rail usage** by improving intermodal connectivity and collaborating to increase the number of Vermont businesses using freight rail.

5. Improve efficiency and reliability of freight movement between **Vermont and its major regional markets**.

6. Recognize and **minimize adverse impacts** of freight movement while delivering the freight on which we rely.

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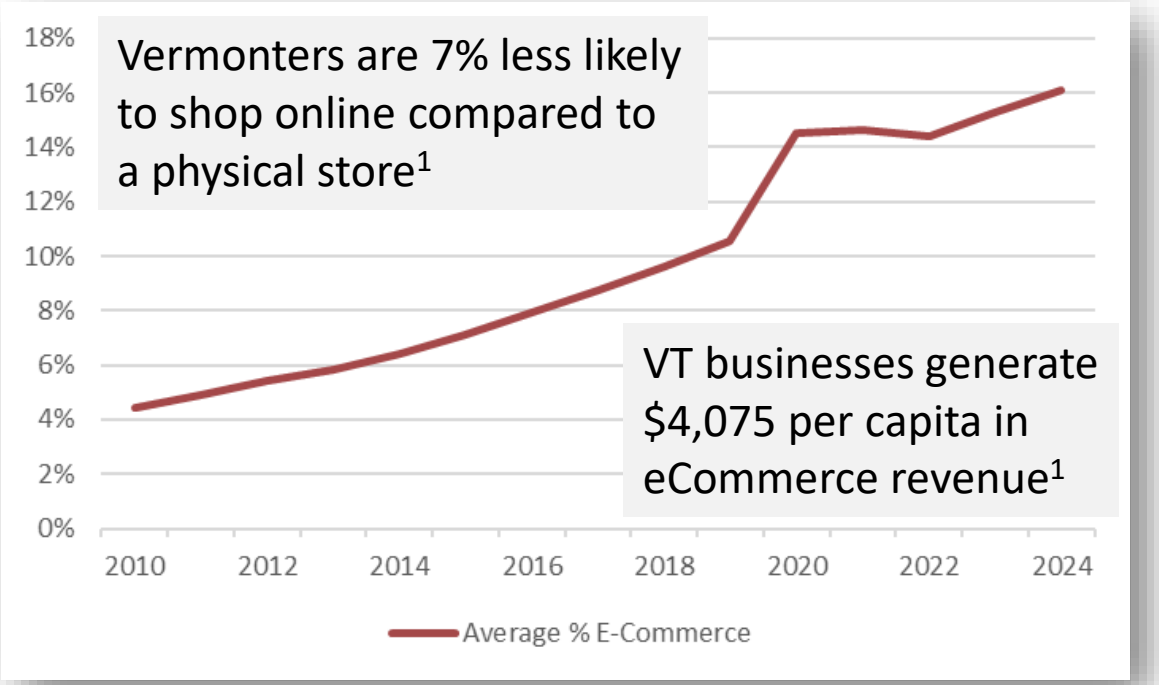
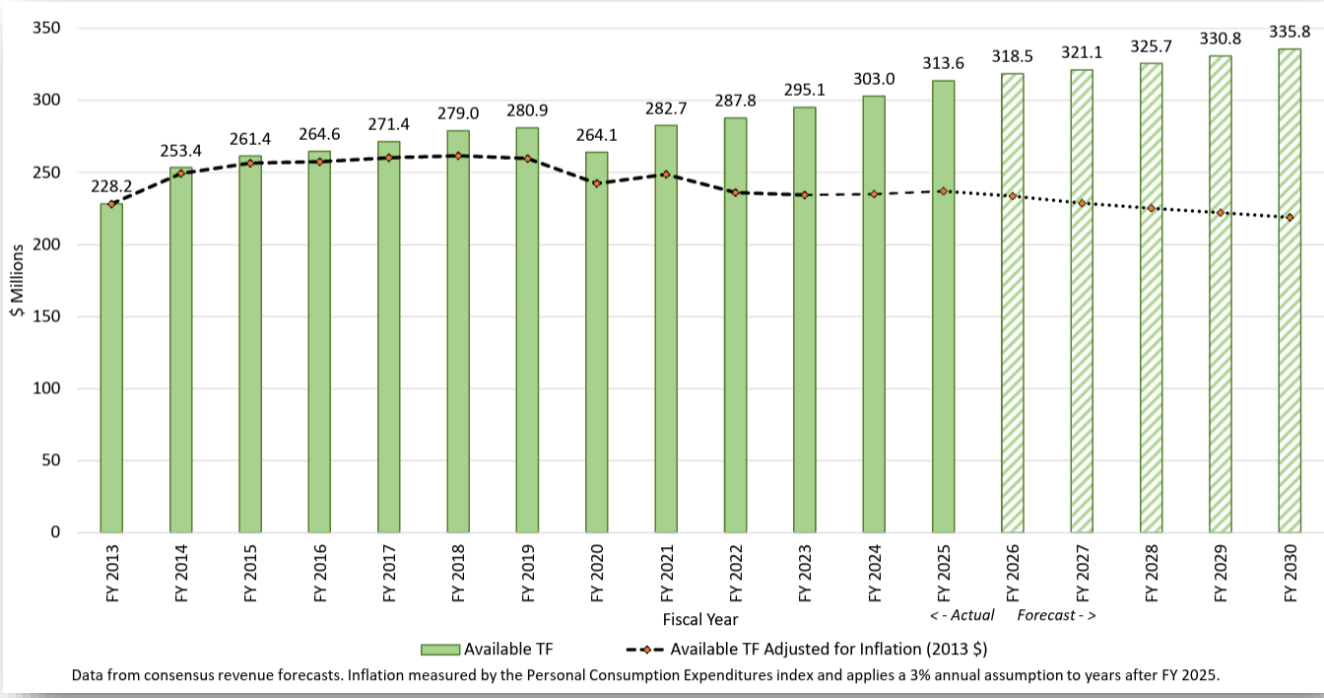
Sample of Key Trends

E-Commerce



Share of Retail Sales (national data)

Transportation Funding



VT Transportation Fund – Declining Purchasing Power

Source: Joint Transportation Oversight Committee (17 Sept 2025)

1: source: https://capitaloneshopping.com/research/online-shopping-statistics-by-state/#vt

Issues & Trends

- **Technology** advancing in both the production (e.g. Global Foundries) and innovations in freight options (e.g. Beta)
- **Volatility in Less Than Truckload (LTL) shipping** impacts Vermont as a small state
- **Federal policies** that affect trade with Canada (e.g. tariffs), etc.
- **Safety**: Slight increase in truck-involved crashes 2021-2024 (419 to 426)
- **E-commerce**: Increased but not replacing in-person shopping trips, so more delivery vehicles, commercial vehicle parking needs in centers, and distribution centers
- **Ports of entry** with Canada: maintenance and staffing
- **Unknowns**: AI, 3-D printing, vehicle tech, other?
- **More frequent big storms and extreme heat** affect transportation
- **Housing** availability, cost, and potential effect of policies
- ***What else?***

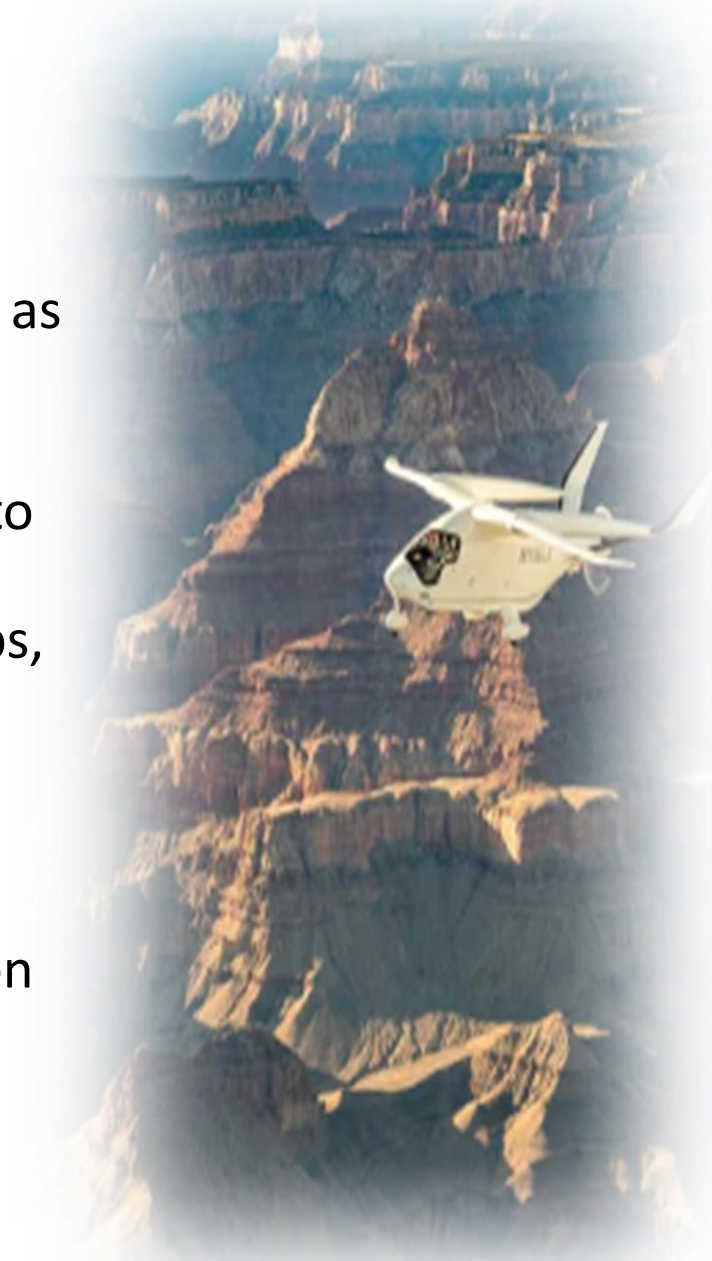


Photo source: Beta (https://beta.team/aircraft?hsCtaAttrib=185024244098)

Draft Recommended Initiatives

- Three slides follow with the 21 initiatives
- Presented by goal area
- Two goal areas/slide
- Some initiatives that may be of particular interest are highlighted

Short Names of Goals

State of Good Repair

Safety & Resilience

System Performance

Increase Freight Rail Use

Efficient Regional Connections

Mitigate Adverse Impacts

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State of Good Repair
Safety & Resilience

25	Maintain a state of good repair (SOGR) of pavement, bridges, and other assets on Vermont's Federal Aid road network to support safe and efficient freight operations.
32	Upgrade all rail lines to 286K weight-bearing capability, emphasizing bridges and weight restricted locations
42	Maintain airport runway surfaces, approaches, and instrumentation in state of good repair (SOGR).
14	Increase resilience of the multimodal freight transportation system to make infrastructure more ready now and to prepare for increasing storm severity
27	Keep highways open and safe through prompt and effective snow removal consistent with AOT's "safe-roads-at-safe-speeds" policy and incident management.
31	Promote the safe movement of commercial vehicles including through enforcement considerations consistent with Vermont's Commercial Vehicle Safety Plan and VTrans Operations and Safety Bureau capabilities.
44	Continuously evaluate the status of Runway Safety Areas (RSA) and Runway Protection Zones (RPZ); develop action plans to remedy any deficiencies. Prepare and distribute educational materials for use by municipalities to avoid obstructions from being built in approach zones.

System Performance
Increase Freight Rail Use

19	Work with neighboring states and Canadian officials to harmonize regulations related to deployment of new technologies in freight transportation applications including Connected and Autonomous Vehicle (CAV) technologies and expanding electric charging and other alternative fueling capacity.
20	Reduce and eventually eliminate restrictions to domestic double stack clearance across the Vermont rail network.
28	Continue to enhance how AOT minimizes delay from work zones and maintenance efforts.
30	Monitor Vermont's truck parking capacity and utilization, and develop strategies to ensure sufficient, safe truck parking is available across the state.
34	Preserve and fully use industrial land parcels with access to rail sidings as well as the rail infrastructure that provides access to them. Educate shippers about rail and intermodal service options and contracting approaches.
103	Facilitate development of freight transload or potentially intermodal facilities in or near Vermont

Efficient Regional Connections
Minimize Adverse Impacts

30	Monitor the evolving freight rail corporate landscape, participate in regional and industry activities as appropriate, including through Surface Transportation Board proceedings.
57	Address Oversized/Overweight truck permitting inconsistencies in the Northeast, including discussions regarding New York State joining the New England Transportation Consortium or other reciprocal permitting arrangements.
4	Engage in equity and "good neighbor" elements of freight planning including evaluating impacts and benefits to communities.
12	Support recommendations of the Vermont Climate Action Plan and Comprehensive Energy Plan to help mitigate climate change and its negative effects on freight movement. Pursue opportunities such as grants to fund low- and zero-carbon fuel/propulsion technologies related to all freight modes and connections such as last-mile delivery.
24	Promote coordination between industry and education/workforce development stakeholders to ensure an adequate-sized workforce with the right skills for current and future freight industry needs.
58	Promote communication of truck size and weight limits and permitting requirements to public and private entities
107	Promote that municipalities and RPCs/RDCs are supported in efforts to identify locally appropriate freight-related land uses as part of Act 181 (10 V.S.A. 6034). Tier 1A of Act 181 can include industrial and commercial land uses.

New: Support efforts to communicate road characteristics, such as for truck drivers to use commercial GPS services.

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Where to Next

Provide comments **by December 11th**

- Online Freight Plan comment tool
- E-mail

Draft of the Freight Plan is anticipated to be posted in January – you will receive an e-mail at that time

Intent to submit to FHWA in February or March

https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/freight

Thank You!

Comments or Questions?

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