

Vermont Rail Plan and Vermont Freight Plan

Senate Transportation Committee

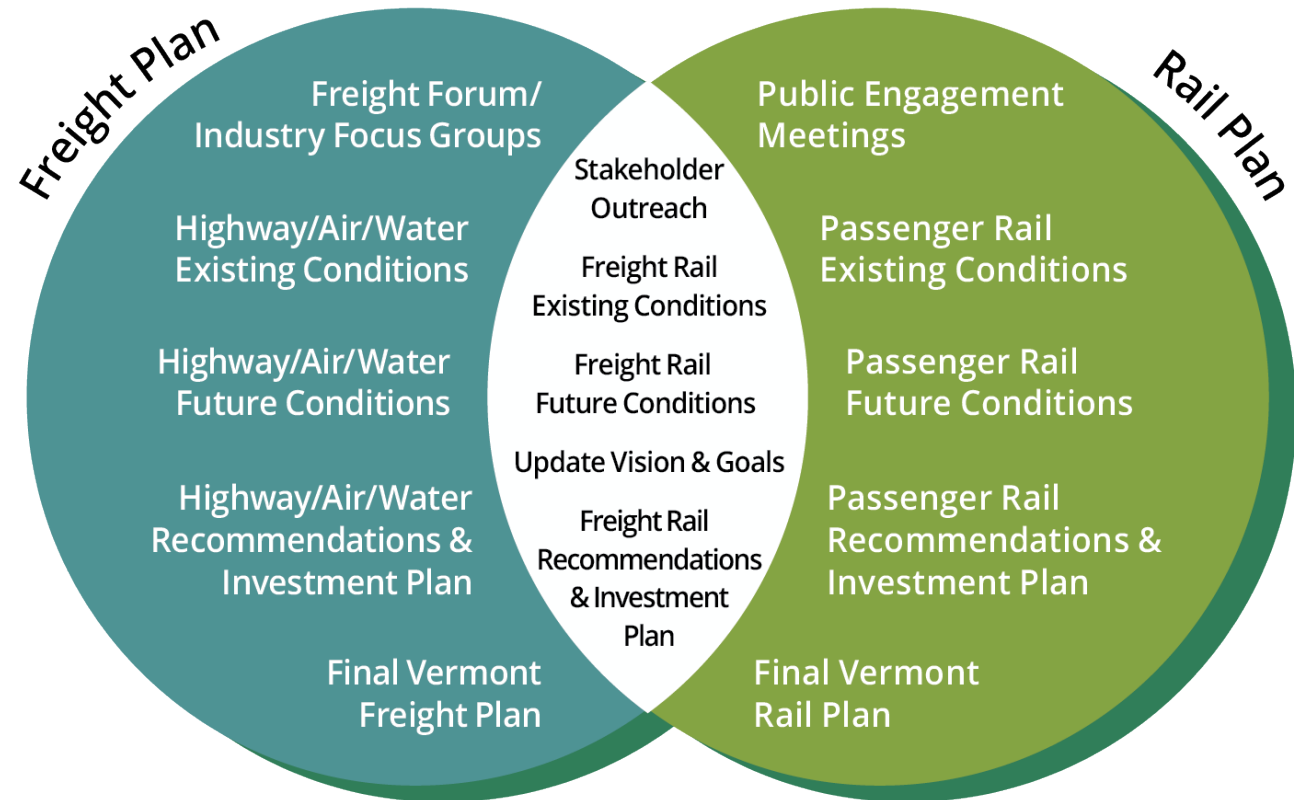
March 17, 2021

Dave Pelletier, AOT Planning Coordinator

One Vision – Two Plans

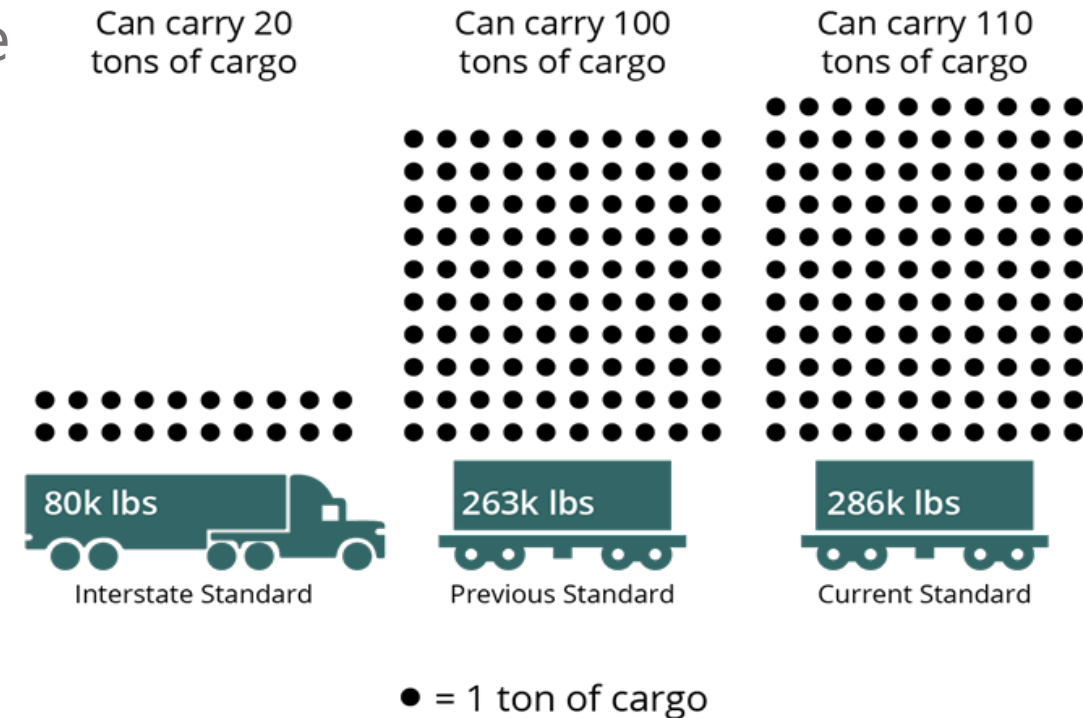
“A safe, reliable and multimodal transportation system that grows the economy, is affordable to use and operate, and serves vulnerable populations.”

– 2040 Vermont Long-Range Transportation Plan



Background

- Good planning makes for efficient passenger and freight transport for Vermont - making the best use of each mode saves wear on the highway system and serves other State goals such as those in the Comprehensive Energy Plan.
- FRA requires a State Rail Plan at minimum every four years to be eligible for certain rail grants.
- FHWA requires a State Freight Plan every five years to obligate Freight Formula funds.

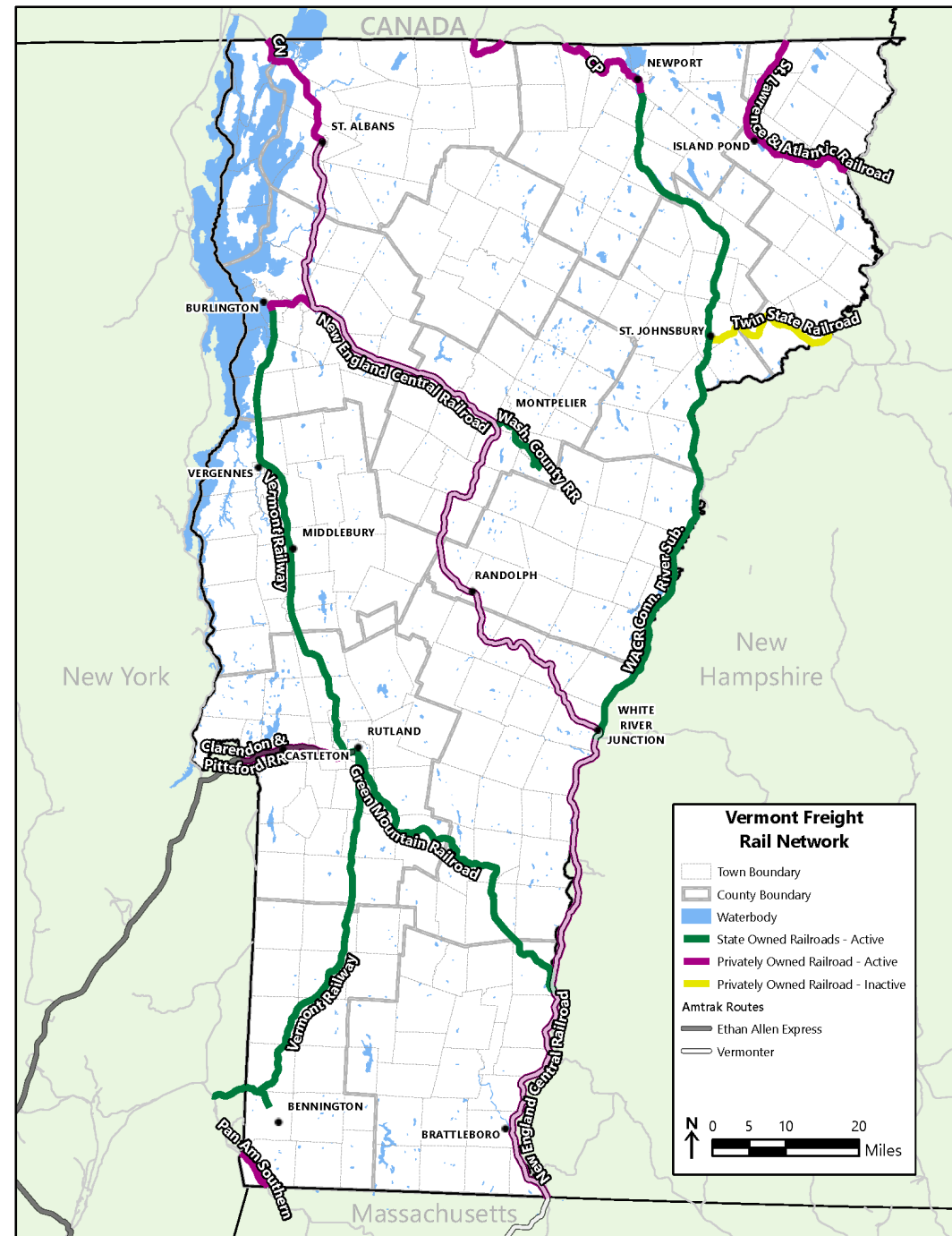


Rail Plan



Vermont Rail Network

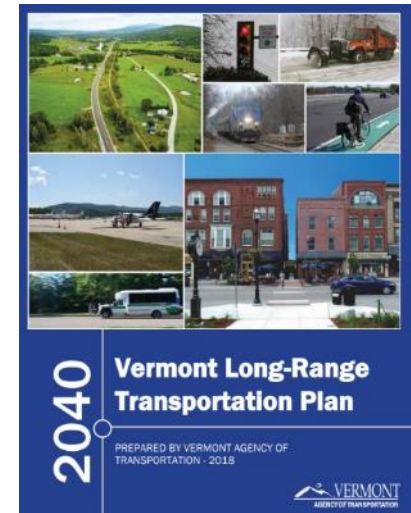
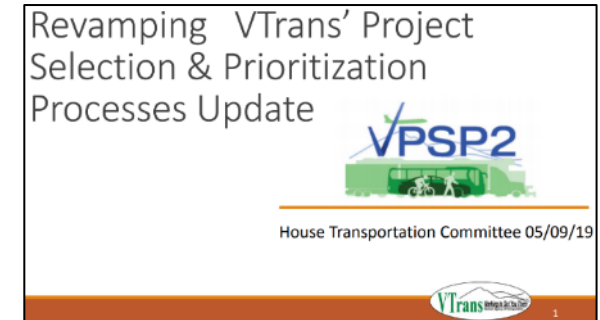
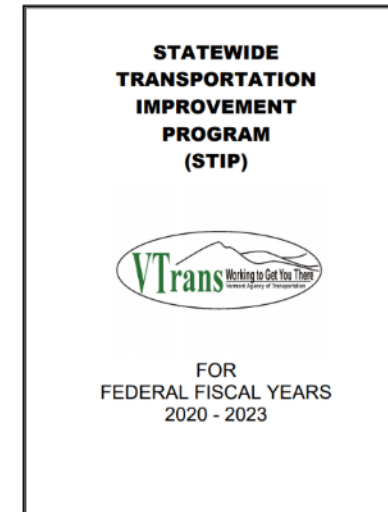
- 578 active miles
- 305 miles state-owned
- Amtrak service on 200 miles



2020 Rail Plan Goals (Minor changes from 2015)

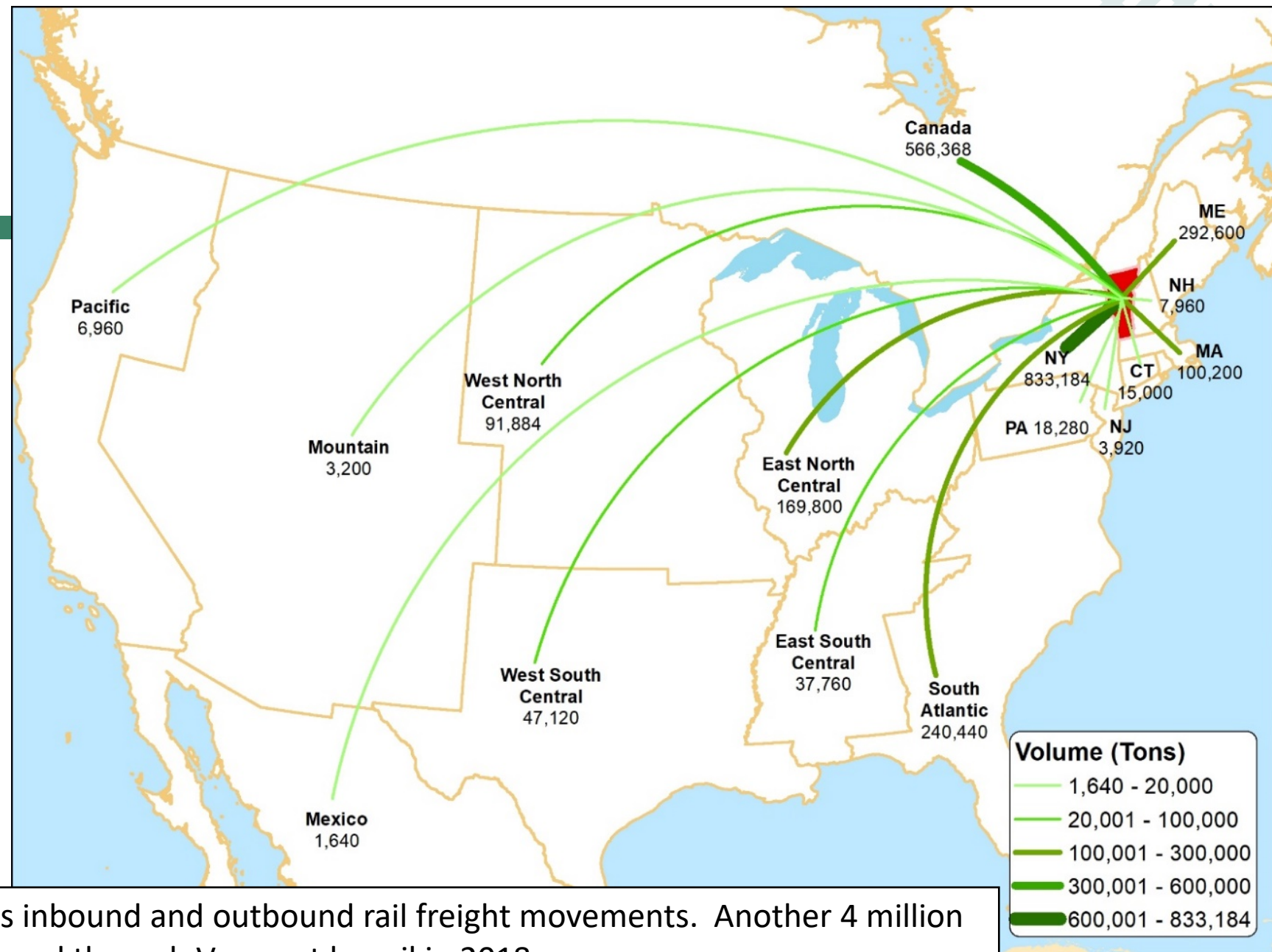
- Maintain existing system (State of Good Repair)
- Expand capacity to accommodate growth
- Increase rail system use (freight & passenger)
- Fund the rail system adequately and sustainably
- Improve intermodal connectivity (freight & passenger)
- Act on opportunities for ancillary economic development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

- Aligned with other AOT efforts



Freight Rail Trade Partners

- Vermont is linked worldwide by short line railroads and then Class I rail networks.
- Tonnage inbound to Vermont increased from 14% in 2011 to 24% in 2018.

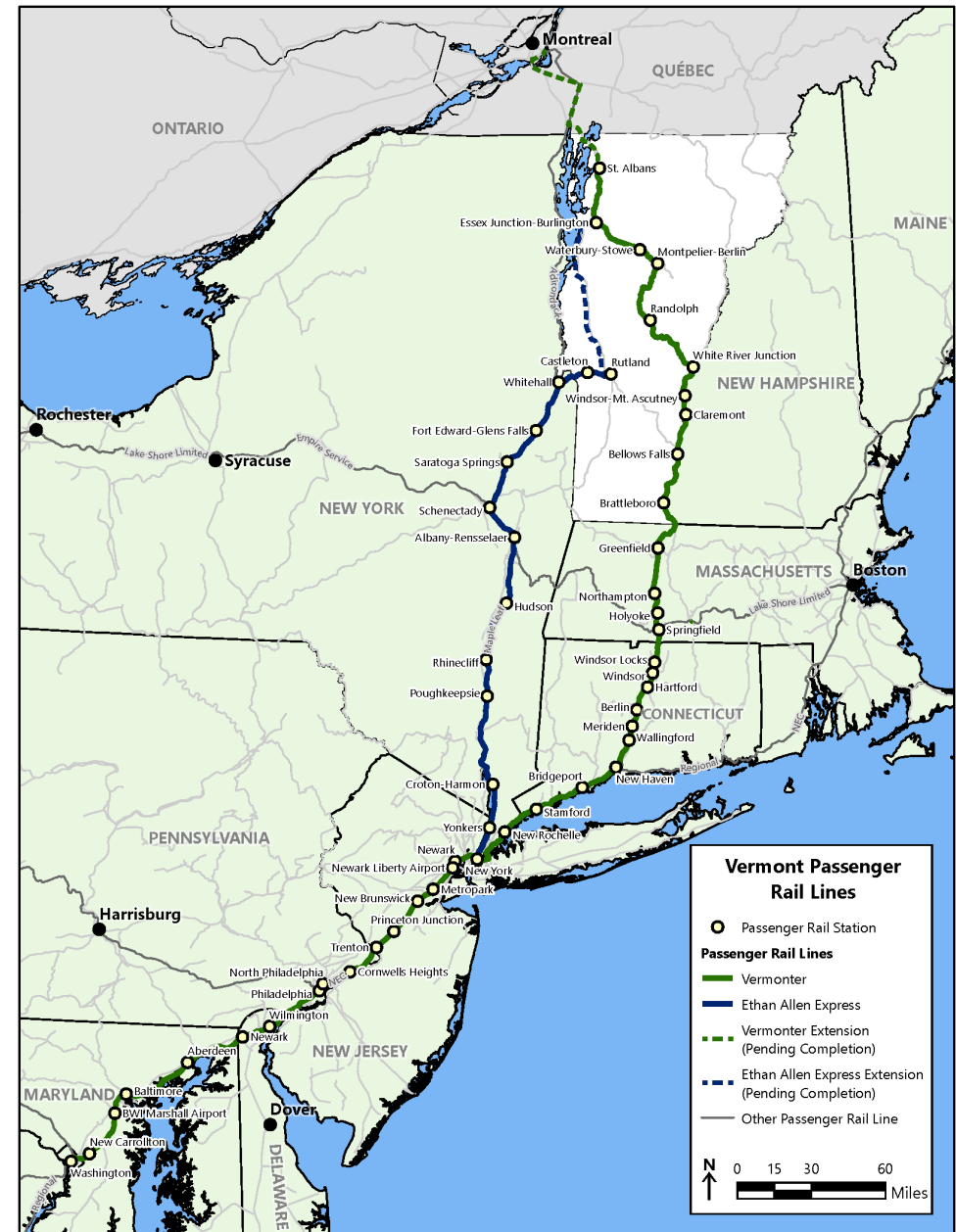


Note: Map only shows inbound and outbound rail freight movements. Another 4 million tons (58% of total) moved through Vermont by rail in 2018

Amtrak Routes

- Ethan Allen Express – NYC to Rutland
- Vermonter – Washington D.C. to St. Albans
- Combined 2019 ridership of 95,234*

* Boardings and de-boardings at Vermont stations (includes Claremont, NH)



Modeling Passenger Rail Initiatives

Background Factors

- Economic & demographic trends
- Committed projects
- How quickly will rail service return to 2019 levels?
- How long until passenger rail demand returns to pre-COVID ridership levels?



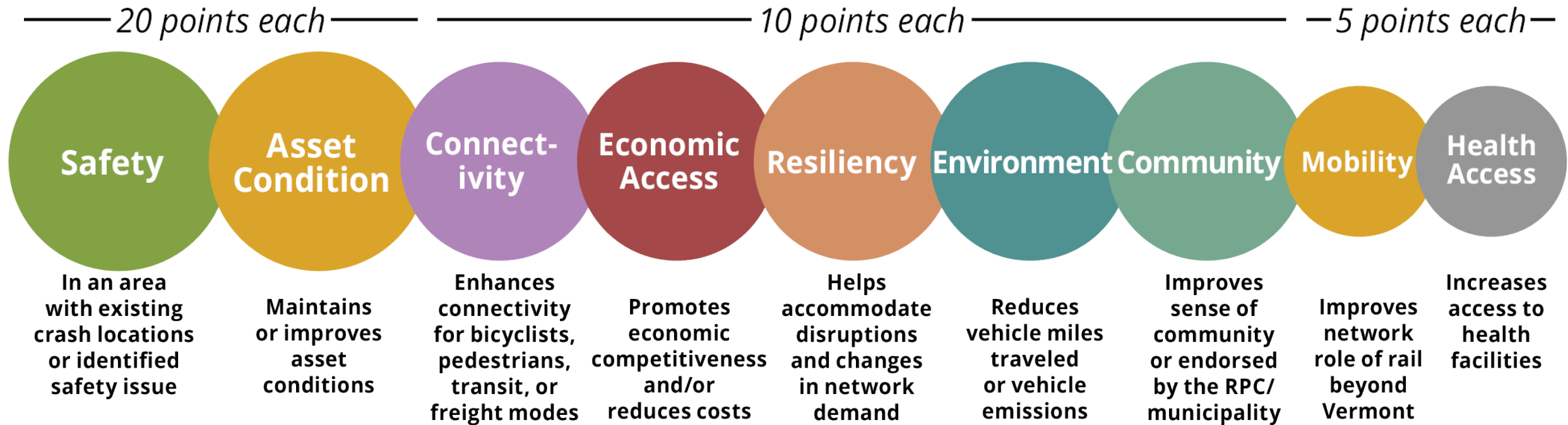
Passenger Rail Modeling – Medium Growth Results

Scenario <i>See Technical Memo #3 for details</i>	Description	2019 Ridership	2040 Ridership	% Change	# Change
Vermont – No Build	One train per day between Washington & St. Albans	78,673	89,400	14%	10,727
<i>Vermont</i> day train extension to Montreal	One train per day to Montreal	78,673	196,000	149%	117,327
Twice-daily <i>Vermont</i> service terminating in Montreal	Two trains per day to Montreal	78,673	382,600	386%	303,927
Extension of one Valley Flyer train to White River Jct.	One Knowledge Corridor train extended from Greenfield, MA	0	33,100	N/A	N/A
Connection to Boston at Springfield, MA from <i>Vermont</i> serving Montreal	One per day between <i>Vermont</i> & potential Springfield-Boston service	78,673	212,600	170%	133,927
79 mph service on <i>Vermont</i>	Increase speed where feasible	78,673	228,600	191%	149,927
Ethan Allen Express – No Build (includes Burlington extension)	One train per day between NYC & Burlington	16,561	37,300	125%	20,739
Additional route Albany - Burlington via Bennington	One train per day serving new route in addition to existing <i>Ethan Allen Express</i>	16,561	67,400	307%	50,839
79 mph service on <i>Ethan Allen Express</i>	Increase speed where feasible	16,561	39,100	136%	22,539
Extend <i>Ethan Allen Express</i> to Connect to <i>Vermont</i> in Essex Junction	Includes Ethan Allen & <i>Vermont</i> to Montreal (net increase)	95,234	238,500 (5,200)	150%	

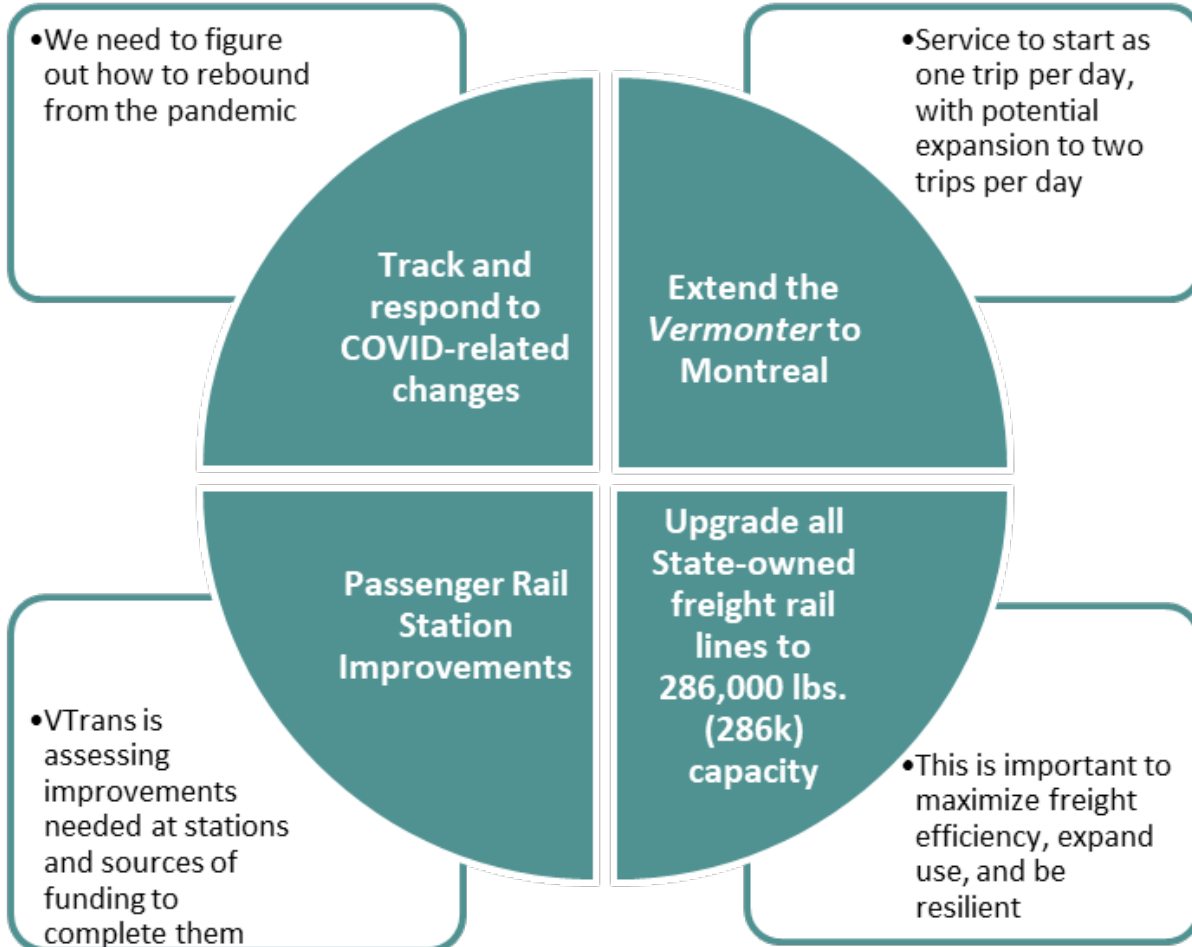
From Goals to Potential Initiatives



Analysis Supported Informed Decisions



First Priority Recommendations



Also, coordinated safety improvements

- Phased deployment of gates/flashers at existing and planned Amtrak public road grade crossings
- Includes Section 130 Highway Crossing Program efforts

Other Priority Recommendations

- 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.
- Maintain and improve freight network connections for Vermont businesses to regional short-haul markets and competitive Class I railroad.
- Improve transit, bicycle, and pedestrian connections to Amtrak trains. Improve wayfinding.
- 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.
- Publicize existing voluntary efforts of railroads and encourage “freight as a good neighbor” while respecting rail’s exemptions from local control.

Other Priority Recommendations cont.

- Preserve and fully use industrial land parcels with access to rail sidings as well as the rail infrastructure that provides the access.
- Add passenger service on the Albany-Bennington-Burlington freight route to supplement Ethan Allen Express service in Western Corridor.
- Ethan Allen Amtrak service extension to meet Vermonter: Burlington to Essex Junction/NECR track improvements.
- Publicize intermodal options to potential shippers, including how to contract for them. 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.

Rail Plan Next Steps

- Public comments due by March 22nd.
- Present updated final draft at the March 25th Vermont Rail Advisory Council (VRAC) meeting.
- AOT reviews the recommendation of the VRAC, makes any final edits, and submits plan to FRA before the May 11th plan lapse date.



Freight Plan



Freight Plan

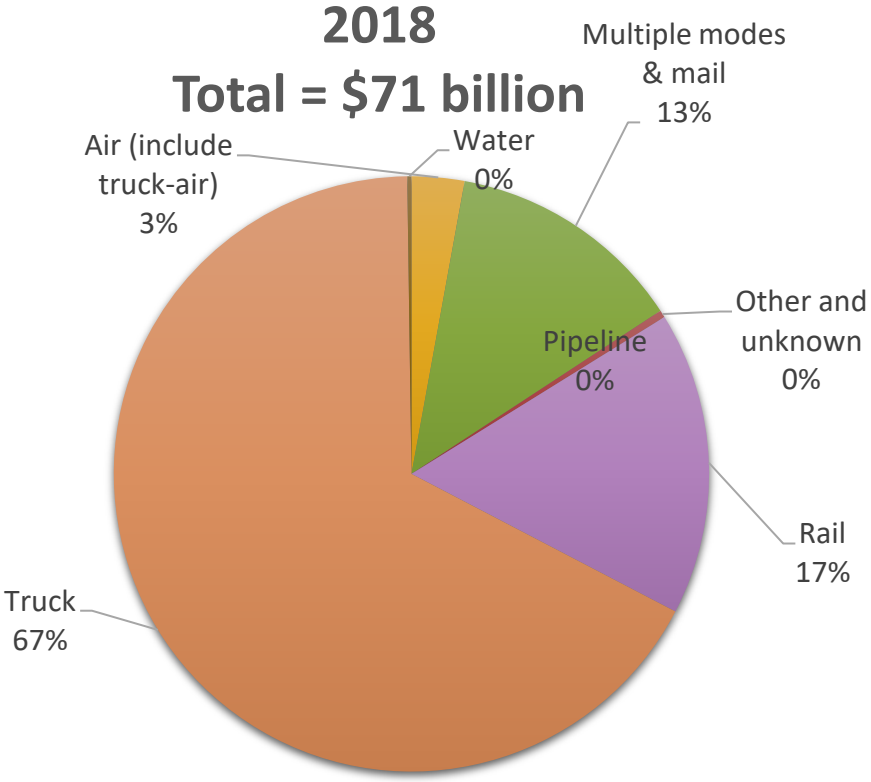
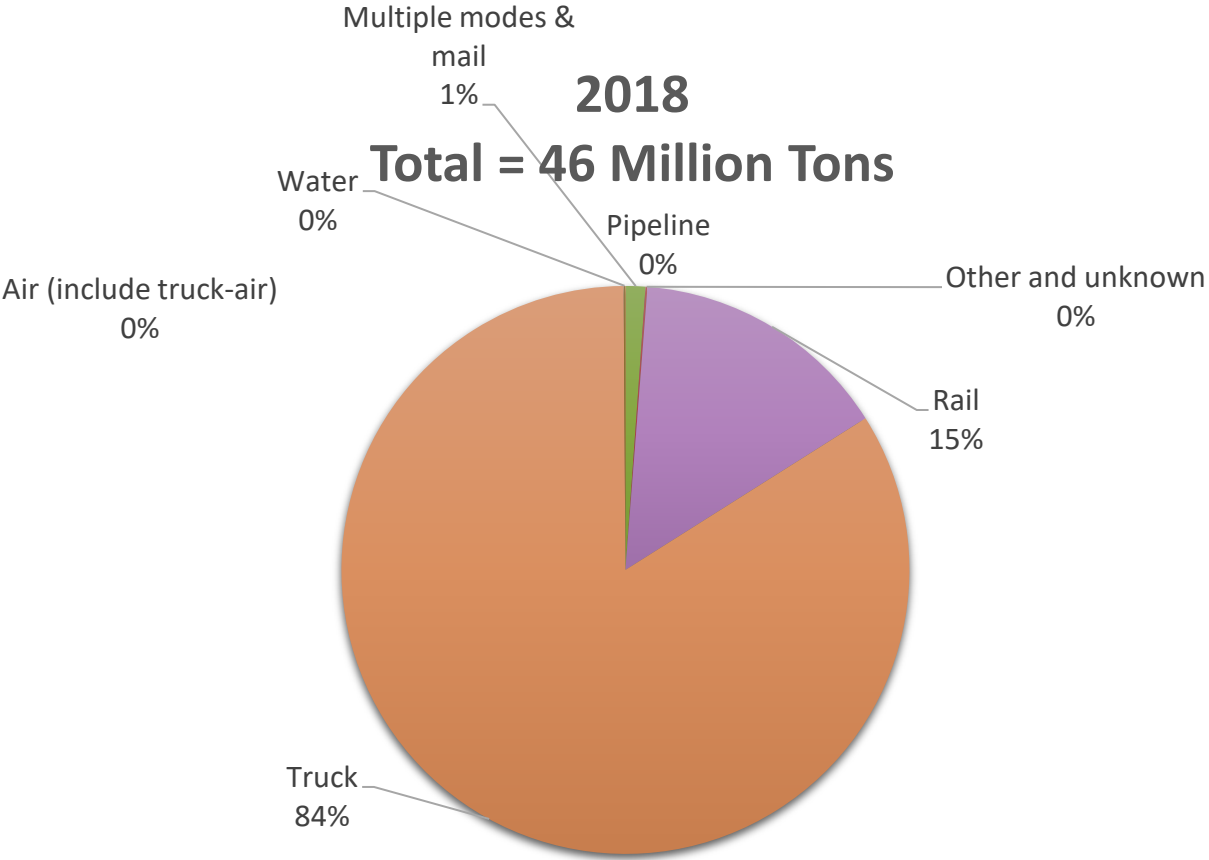
- The Freight Plan is underway and will pick up steam as the Rail Plan is finalized
 - Will build on relevant information
 - Freight rail existing conditions
 - Commodity flows
 - Needs and potential initiatives
 - Supplemented by information from other modes (truck, air, water)



Freight Plan Content (abridged)

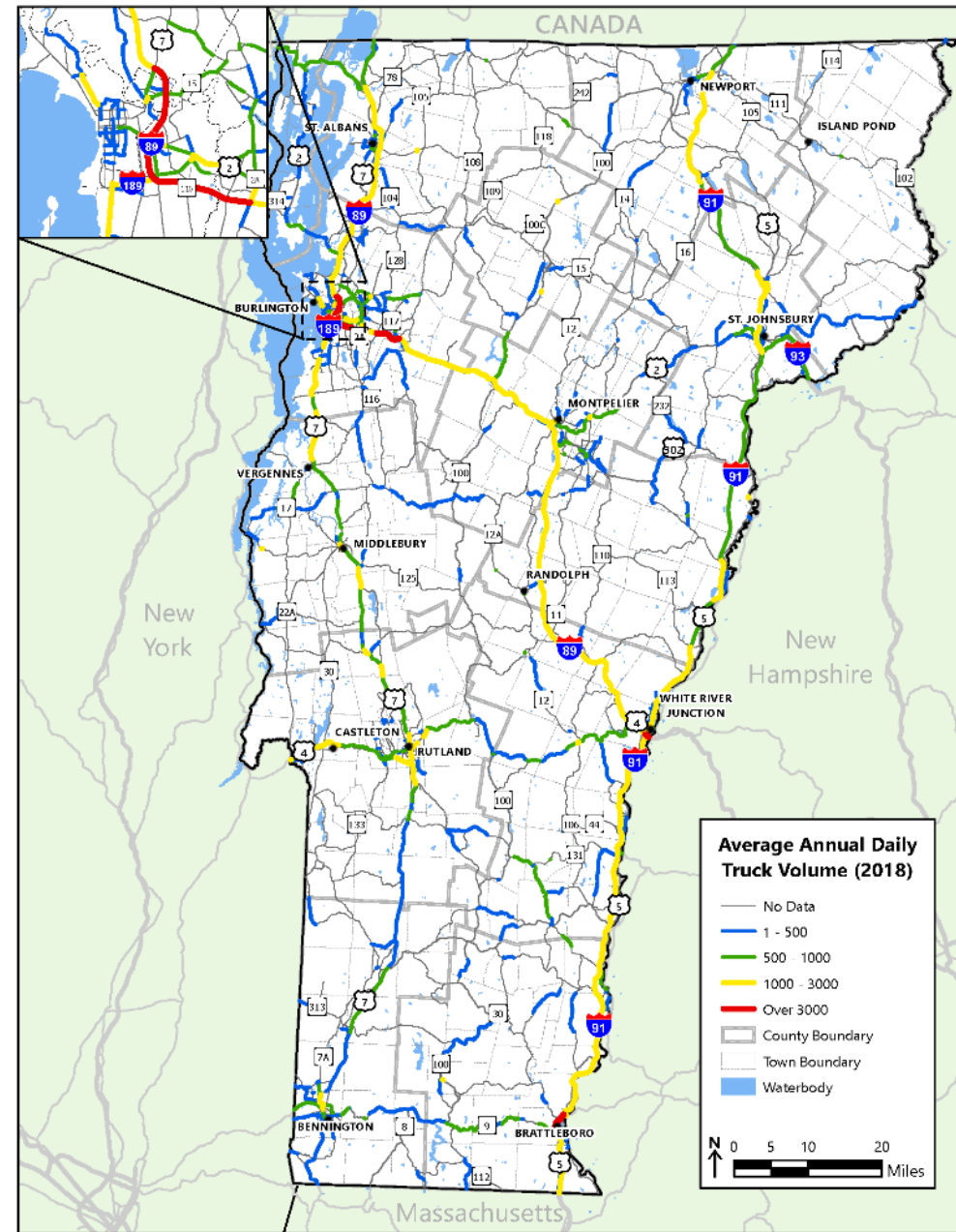
- An identification of significant freight system **needs and issues**.
- A description of freight **policies, strategies, and performance measures** that will guide the State's freight-related transportation investment decisions.
- A description of how innovative technology and operational strategies, including **freight intelligent transportation systems (ITS)**, that improve the safety and efficiency of freight movement, were considered.
- An inventory of facilities with **freight mobility issues, such as bottlenecks** and strategies the State is employing to address the freight mobility issues.
- Consideration of any **significant congestion or delay** caused by freight movements and any strategies to mitigate that congestion or delay.
- A **freight investment plan** that includes a list of fiscally-constrained priority projects and describes how funds made available would be invested and matched.

Freight Modes



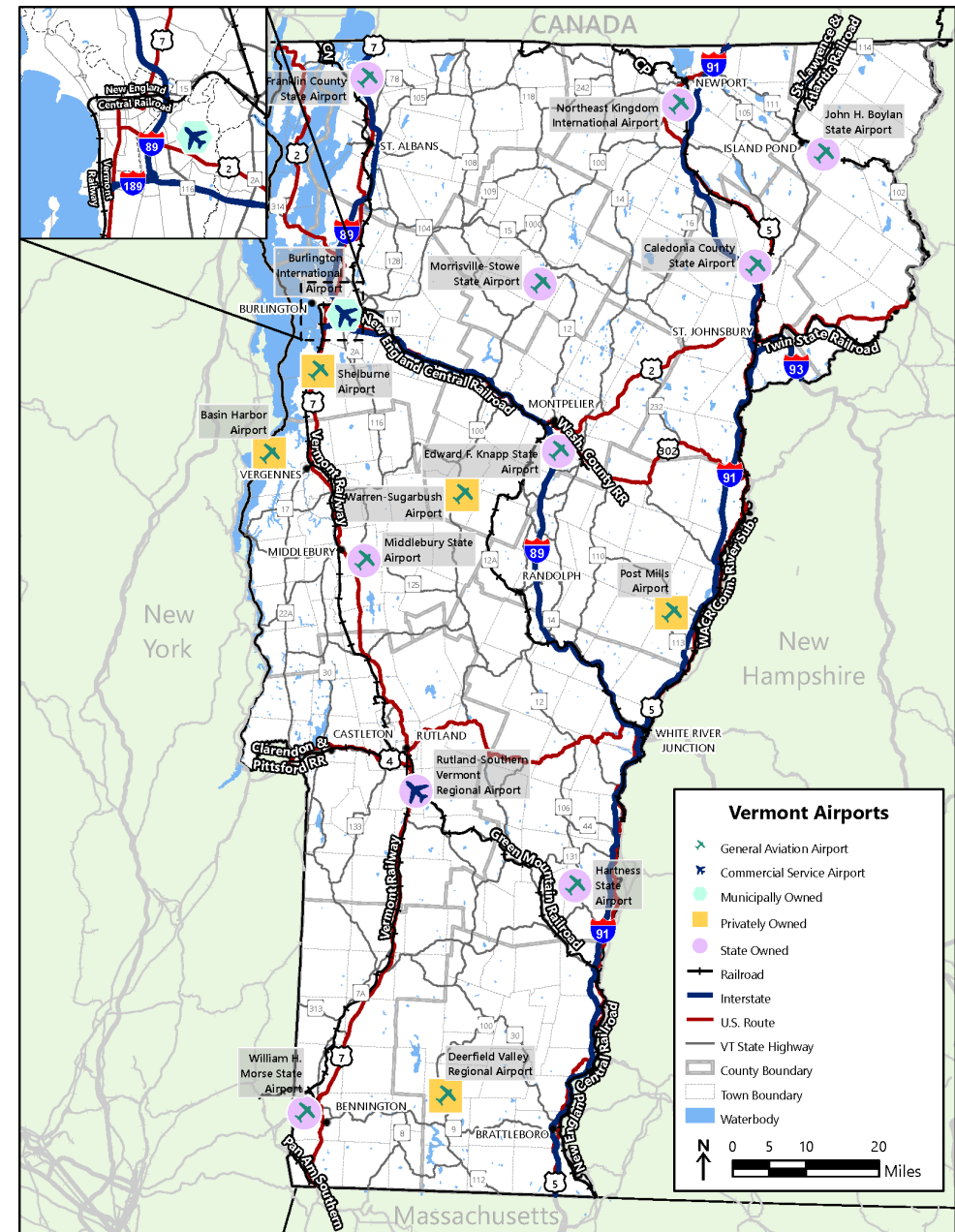
Truck Volumes

- I-89 through South Burlington/Burlington/Burlington –highest truck volumes in the system (>6,000)
- Few areas outside the Interstate system and parts of US 7 are above 1,000 trucks per day
- A-35 project will result in growth on I-89



Air Freight

- Burlington International Airport received approximately 4.9 million pounds of freight and originated approximately 3.7 million pounds of freight in 2019



Freight Plan Special Focus Areas

- DMV Online Permitting Systems upgrades
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)
 - Traveler Information
 - Permit Enforcement
- Electric Vehicles – NESCAUM* multi-state MOU
- Autonomous Vehicles – Vermont Testing Permit process
- E-Commerce

*New England States for Coordinated Air Use Management

Freight Plan Next Steps

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Statewide Freight Forum
- Freight Plan Advisory Committee (FPAC) meetings
- Draft Plan by June 30, 2021

Thank You

For more information on these Plan updates, visit
vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports
vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/freight

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