

Memorandum

To: House Committee on Transportation
Senate Committee on Transportation
From: Dan Delabruere, VTrans Rail Program Director
Date: February 12, 2025
Re: Act 148, Section 30; Development of New Vermont Rail Plan; Bicycle Storage; Report

On behalf of the Agency of Transportation, I am pleased to submit the following update on Vermont Rail Plan development and associated issues as directed by Act 187, Section 30, which reads:

** * * Vermont Rail Plan; Amtrak * * **

Sec. 30. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW VERMONT RAIL PLAN; BICYCLE STORAGE; REPORT

(a) As the Agency of Transportation develops the new Vermont Rail Plan, it shall consider and address the following:

- (1) adding additional daily service on the Vermonter for some or all the service area; and*
- (2) expanding service on the Valley Flyer to provide increased service on the Vermonter route.*

(b) The Agency of Transportation shall consult with Amtrak and the State Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) on passenger education of and sufficient capacity for bicycle storage on Amtrak trains on the Vermonter and Ethan Allen Express routes.

*(c) The Agency of Transportation shall provide an oral update on the development of the Vermont Rail Plan in general and the requirements of subsection (a) of this section specifically and the consultation efforts required under subsection (b) of this section to the House and Senate Committees on Transportation not later than **February 15, 2025**.*

Vermont Rail Plan 2025 Update

The Rail Plan update is well underway, currently at the midpoint. A hybrid public meeting was held on October 23, 2024, in St. Albans and online to open the process. A second hybrid public meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2025, in Brattleboro at the Municipal Office building. More information, including meeting materials and the existing 2021 Rail Plan, is available at the following link: [Reports & Plans | Agency of Transportation](#)

The Vermont Rail Advisory Council (VRAC) continues to be the primary advisory body to the update of the plan. They added a VRAC Rail Plan Subcommittee to support more in-depth participation by interested members. At an even more technical level there is a working group including representatives of Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission and Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies (VAPDA).

The VRAC met on August 13, 2024, to kick off the update process, again on November 12, 2024, to provide input on an initial assessment of existing conditions and to review goals and objectives for the updated plan, and once again on February 11, 2025, to review a draft set of recommendations intended to support and expand passenger and freight rail service in Vermont in coordination with the goals of other related plans, such as the Public Transit Policy Plan. Content will continue to be added to the Rail Plan webpage as the update continues. The webpage includes an interactive webmap through which anyone may enter comments or ask to be added to the e-mail list for updates. We offer to provide the 2025 Rail Plan when it is completed or answer any additional questions.

Evaluation of Potential Passenger Service Initiatives

Ridership projections for various service scenarios including additional daily service on the Vermonter, and an extension of a daily Valley Flyer service are included in the evaluation. Both extensions of the Valley Flyer to Brattleboro and White River Junction were included to offer more possibilities. The extension of the Vermonter to Montreal, as well as connecting the Ethan Allen Express and the Vermonter via linking Burlington and Essex Junction are also explored.

Bicycles on the Vermonter and Ethan Allen Express

Regarding promotion and capacity of Amtrak services to carry bicycles, AOT has resolved the pricing discrepancy between the Vermonter and Ethan Allen. The price of bringing along a bicycle on both trains is now the same, generally \$20 for each leg of a trip. Capacity for bicycles has not been an issue to our knowledge. Adding additional bicycle capacity in the future could be a challenge as additional bicycle storage space can't be added without completely removing seating. This is not a viable option as other states participating in the Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) are resistant to removing revenue-generating seats. More information can be found at the following link: [Bring Your Bike Onboard the Train | Amtrak](#)