



# Vermont Rail Plan Highlights

Vermont Legislature:  
Senate Transportation Committee  
April 29, 2026

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# Coordinated Planning

**Rail Plan:** Amtrak & rail freight

**Freight Plan:** all modes of freight

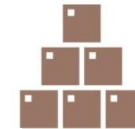
- Interactive webmaps
- Rail Plan storymap
- Five-minute Intro to rail video
- Public meeting recordings

<https://vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports>

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



580  
miles

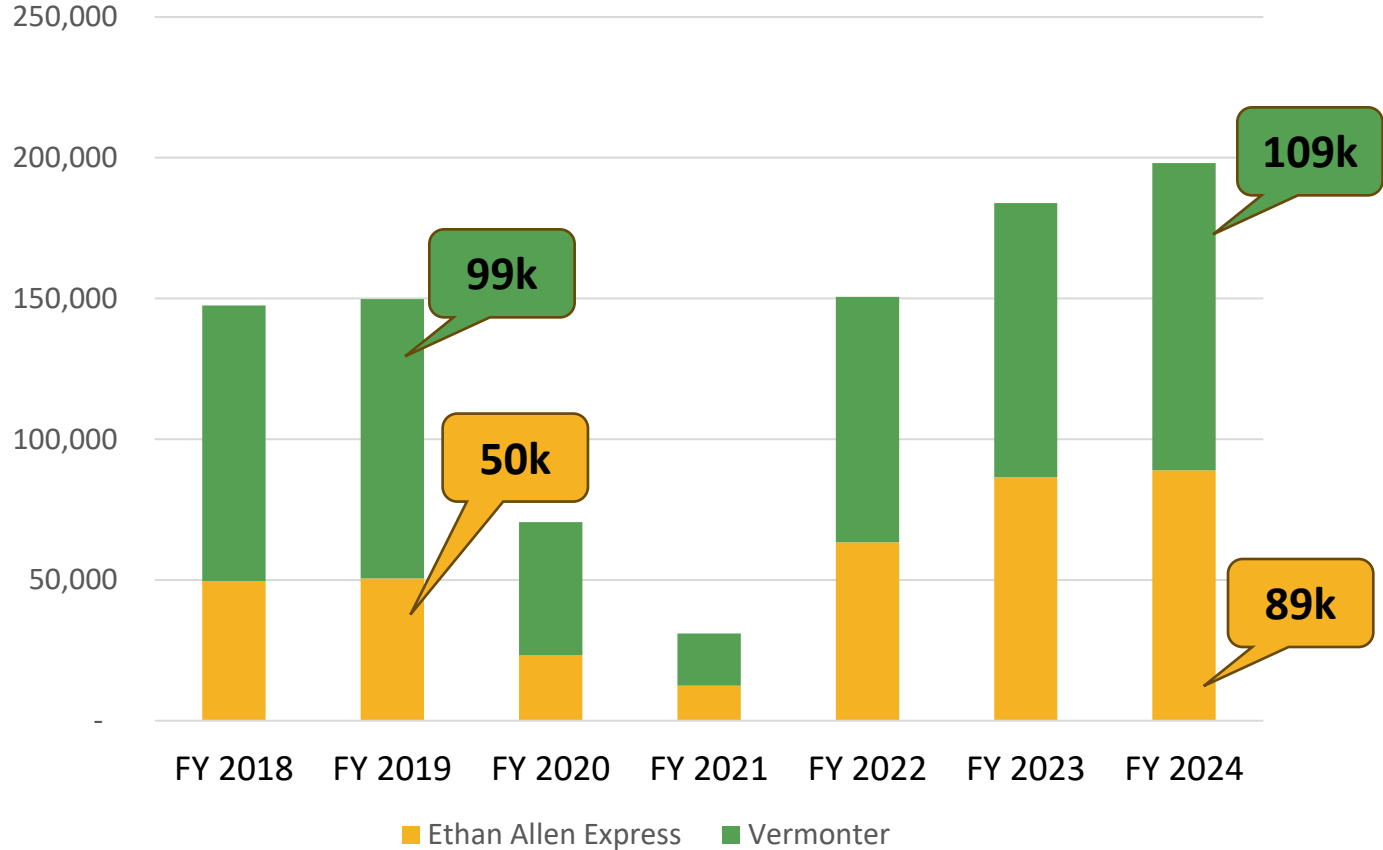


41 million  
tons



116,000  
passengers

# Summary – Intercity Passenger Rail



## Performance Measures Are Heading the Right Way

- High farebox return. 87% on the Ethan Allen Express, and 78% on the Vermonter.
- Effective speeds on both lines continue to improve.
- On-Time performance to the end point exceeds targets.

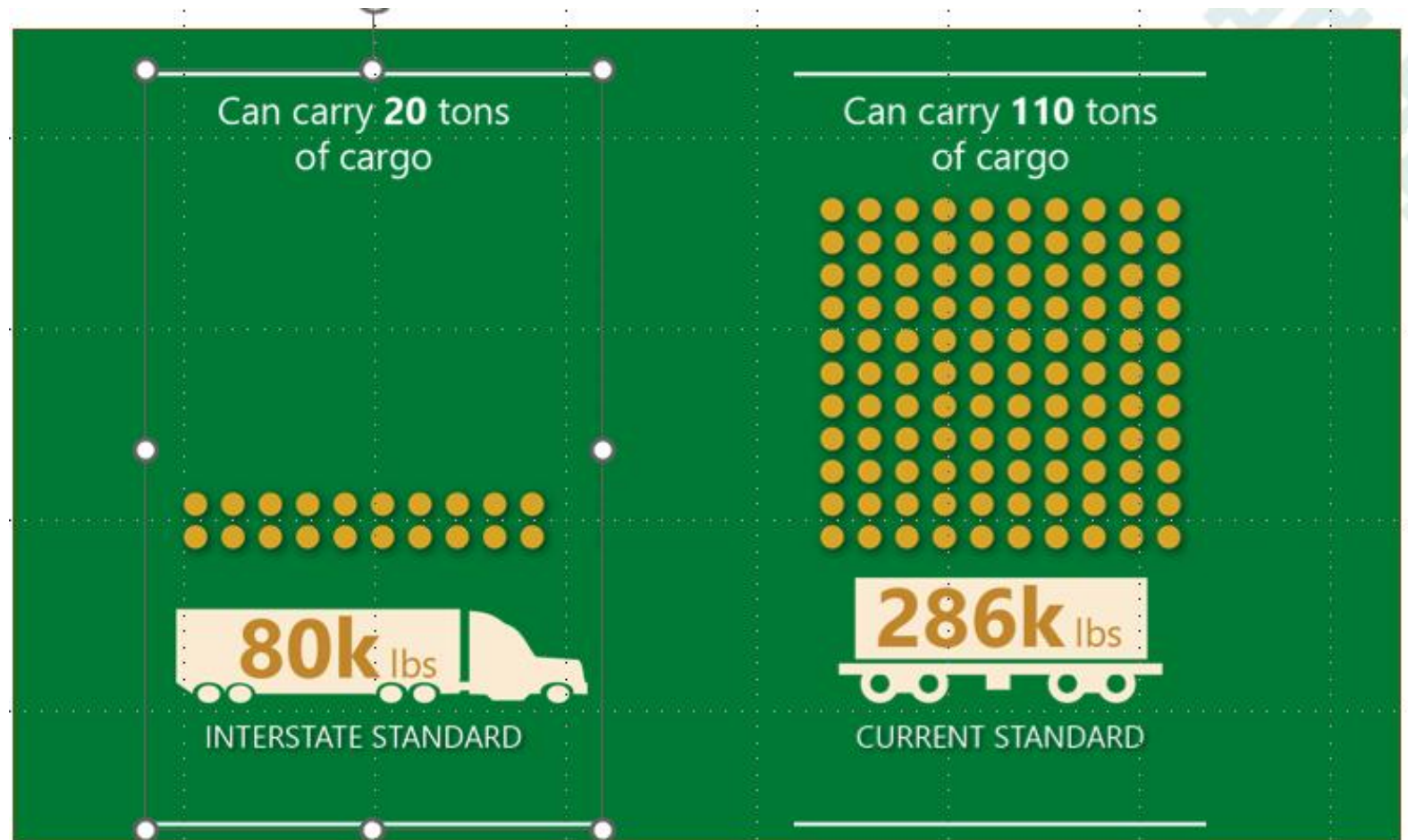
Source: Amtrak, 2025 Note. Federal Fiscal Year is October 1 – September 30

# Summary – Freight Rail

The rail system in Vermont carried approximately two million tons of freight in 2023, slightly lower than each of the prior five years.

## Rail is Safe

Moving the same weight and distance (a billion ton-miles) involved approximately 230 truck crashes or one train crash.



# Flood Vulnerability Analysis

- VTrans has a highly regarded Transportation Resilience Planning Tool (TRPT) for highways
- Expansion to rail completed in 2025
- The extremely vulnerable State-owned rail and rail trail locations are in Rail Plan to support grant applications and communication of needs
- Rail Plan recommends addressing flood vulnerability systemwide and in specific highly vulnerable locations
- Rail staff plan to use more complete set of results as they develop projects



# Themes From Public Comments

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- Economic Opportunities
- Community Concerns and Engagement
- Multimodal Enhancements
- Passenger Rail Efficiency and Connectivity
- Environmental and Safety Considerations
- Equity and Accessibility
- Funding and Prioritization



# Rail Plan Goals

1. *Maintain* existing system (State of Good Repair).
2. *Expand* capacity to accommodate growth.
3. *Increase rail system use* (freight & passenger).
4. *Fund* the rail system adequately & sustainably.
5. *Improve intermodal connectivity* (freight & passenger).
6. Act on opportunities for ancillary *economic development*.
7. *Enhance safety, security, and resilience* of the rail system, while also reducing negative impacts on the environment.

# Recommended Initiatives

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- Robust process of analysis and engagement.
  - 38 recommended initiatives
  - These include policy and location-specific recommendations
  - The recommended initiatives by goal follow; a sample that especially drew discussion are *highlighted*
- 



# Safety and Resilience

| ID   | Description   |
|------|---|
| 13   | <b><i>Increase resilience of rail system to make critical infrastructure more resilient now and to prepare for increasing storm severity</i></b>  |
| 122  | Continue to improve at-grade rail crossing safety with gates, flashers, and other safety improvements at existing and planned public road crossings with an emphasis on the top 50 prioritized sites on state highways.           |
| 19   | <b><i>Publicize existing voluntary efforts of railroads and encourage “freight as a good neighbor” while respecting rail’s exemptions from local control</i></b>  |
| 2531 | Confirm and address the sections of rail that are most vulnerable to flood damage using results of the expansion of the Transportation Resilience Planning Tool (TRPT) to rail. See appendix of Rail Plan for priority locations. |
| 2532 | <b><i>Enhance public safety relating to rail infrastructure, for example by further publicizing and encouraging participation in Operation Lifesaver of Vermont.</i></b>  |

# State of Good Repair and Funding

| ID        | Description  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>2</b>  | <b><i>Upgrade all rail lines to 286K weight-bearing capability, emphasizing bridges and weight restricted locations</i></b>  |
| 115       | Upgrade WACR Connecticut River Line Bridges and Track up to 286k standard (White River Junction to Newport)  |
| 126       | Upgrade NECR Winooski Branch Bridges and Track to 286k standard (Burlington to Essex Junction)   |
| 110       | VTR track upgrade between Hoosick and Rutland to continuous welded rail (CWR) with a minimum of 115 lb. rail   |
| <b>4</b>  | <b><i>Seek grants and innovative funding approaches for freight and passenger rail</i></b>   |
| <b>18</b> | <b><i>Further enhance marketing of Vermont passenger rail</i></b>  |
| <b>3</b>  | 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        |
| 112       | Upgrade GMRC Bridges and Track to 286k standard (Rutland to Bellows Falls)   |
| 2522      | Coordinate to upgrade the privately owned East Alburgh Bridge that is important for international freight movement and would be used by the passenger train to Montreal. |
| 113       | Upgrade WACR Montpelier & Barre Sub. Bridges and Track up to 286k standard (Montpelier to Barre)   |

# Expand Capacity

| ID          | Description   |
|-------------|---|
| 100         | <b><i>Vermont Extension to Montreal – one round trip/ day</i></b>   |
| <b>21</b>   | Work to reduce causes of delay to Ethan Allen Express and Vermonter service within and beyond Vermont’s borders through partnerships  |
| 102         | Vermont Extension to Montreal – two round trips/ day  |
| 103         | Extension of Ethan Allen Express from Burlington to Essex Junction to connect with Vermonter.   |
| 104         | <b><i>Add passenger service on the Albany-Bennington-Burlington freight route to supplement Ethan Allen Express service in Western Corridor. This is part of the FRA Corridor ID study.</i></b> |
| 105         | Bring the Vermonter up to 79 MPH where conditions allow   |
| 106         | Bring the Ethan Allen Express up to 79 MPH where conditions allow   |
| 108         | <b><i>Extend one Valley Flyer service from Greenfield, MA to White River Junction, VT</i></b>   |
| 2527        | Extend one Valley Flyer service from Greenfield, MA to Brattleboro, VT  |
| <b>2528</b> | Explore increases to peak season passenger capacity on both Amtrak lines.   |
| <b>2529</b> | Reduce and eventually eliminate restrictions to domestic double stack clearance across the state. For example, on the NECR and the GMRC/CLP.  |

# Intermodal Connectivity

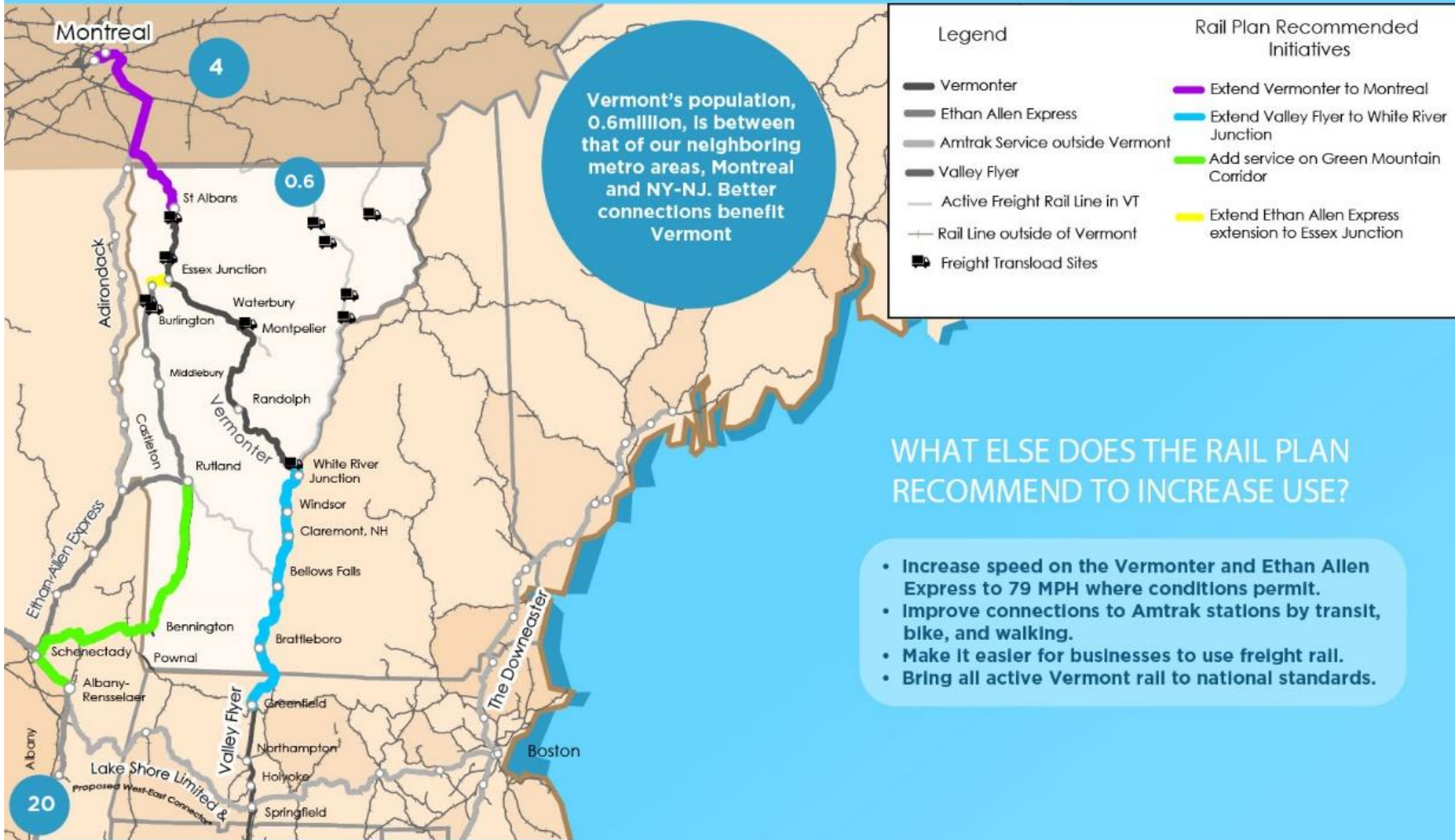
| ID   | Description   |
|------|---|
| 111  | Passenger rail station improvements statewide, prioritizing stations based on usage trends and station needs, with a focus on multimodal access.  |
| 14   | <b><i>Improve multi-modal connections including bicycle, pedestrian, and transit to Amtrak stations. Improve wayfinding, Pick-up/Drop-off, supply of nearby parking (vehicles and bicycles) for short and long term uses. These efforts include partnerships and collaboration with adjacent neighbors.</i></b>                     |
| 8    | <b><i>Facilitate development of freight transload or potentially intermodal facilities in or near Vermont</i></b>   |
| 2507 | <b><i>Improve multimodal coordination between Amtrak stations with broader intercity and interstate highway access (intercity buses including Greyhound, VT Translines, etc.). Including special combo fares and other incentives for multimodal travel. Connections from stations, such as Dartmouth from White River Jct.</i></b> |
| 2506 | Investigate a coordinated connection (rail, bus, etc.) at both Rutland and Bellows Falls to connect passengers between the Ethan Allen Express and the Vermonter to Killington, Ludlow/Okemo and Chester.   |
| 2509 | Add signs to help drivers know about and find Amtrak stations on I-91, I-89, and other major corridors in Vermont.  |

# Economic Development

| ID  | Description  |
|-----|--|
| 116 | Burlington Railyard Enterprise Project - Improve safety in rail yard, interconnections for the community, and multimodal transportation infrastructure                       |
| 6   | <b><i>Preserve and fully use industrial land parcels with access to rail sidings as well as the rail infrastructure that provides access to them.</i></b>                    |
| 9   | Maintain and improve freight network connections for Vermont businesses to regional short-haul markets and competitive Class I railroad (mix of physical and policy matters) |
| 15  | <b><i>Support smart land use growth likely to increase rail use, such as transit-oriented development (TOD) and other housing strategies near Amtrak stations.</i></b>       |
| 5   | <b><i>Educate shippers about rail carload and intermodal service options and contracting approaches</i></b>  |
| 20  | Modernize freight rail yards.  |

# WHERE RAIL COULD GO...

INITIATIVES FROM THE 2025 VERMONT RAIL PLAN TO ADD CAPACITY



\*Proposed MassDOT West-East Line: <https://www.mass.gov/compass-rail>

It will take many partners to make these recommendations happen. Find more information at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/rail/reports>



# 2026 Freight Plan

...near completion.



# Goals of the Freight Plan



## STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

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



## SAFETY & RESILIENCE

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



## SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

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



## INCREASE FREIGHT RAIL USE

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



## EFFICIENT REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

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



## MITIGATE ADVERSE IMPACTS

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



## Key Take-Aways

1. Maintenance is essential
2. Opportunity: enhance connection between modes
3. Transportation is a network

- Invest in State of Good Repair
- Way-finding and access to Amtrak stations
- Preserve and fully use sites with freight rail access
- Educate about and make transloading freight easier
- Advance Vermonter to Montreal; explore Valley Flyer extension and stay engaged with Corridor ID studies

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