

VERMONT FREIGHT PLAN & RAIL PLAN UPDATES

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 3 | WINTER 2020

Public Engagement Drives Vermont's Rail Plan Development

This Fall was chock full of freight and rail planning! Public engagement is essential to developing plans with broad support. Intent on reaching a diverse group of stakeholders despite the pandemic, our team held a series of presentations, conducted the first virtual Town Hall, and welcomed online feedback in this initial round of plan outreach.

*Through virtual meetings and activities,
we invite others to partner in the journey.*

Beginning on September 1st, the team presented project information and listened to comments and concerns at five Regional Planning Commission (RPC)

meetings. Thank you to Addison County, Chittenden County, Northwest Regional, Rutland, and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee RPCs for including us on your agendas.

The Vermont Rail Advisory Committee (VRAC) discussed progress on the Plan at their meeting on September 9th. The VRAC is a Governor-appointed group of representatives for a diverse range of freight and passenger rail perspectives.

Last but not least, the first of two virtual Town Halls took place on October 6th. The team led a rich dialogue and fielded insightful questions from the public. See [page 2](#) for information on the next Town Hall, and to view the previous event on YouTube.

Thank you for participating in this journey with us!

Potential Initiatives Take Shape

The reasonable initiatives generated from public comment, analysis, and previous plans will be summarized in a table for review. The initiatives will be screened using a simplified version of VTrans Project Selection and Project Prioritization (VPSP2). As illustrated on page 2, this screening will consider the initiative's benefits to:

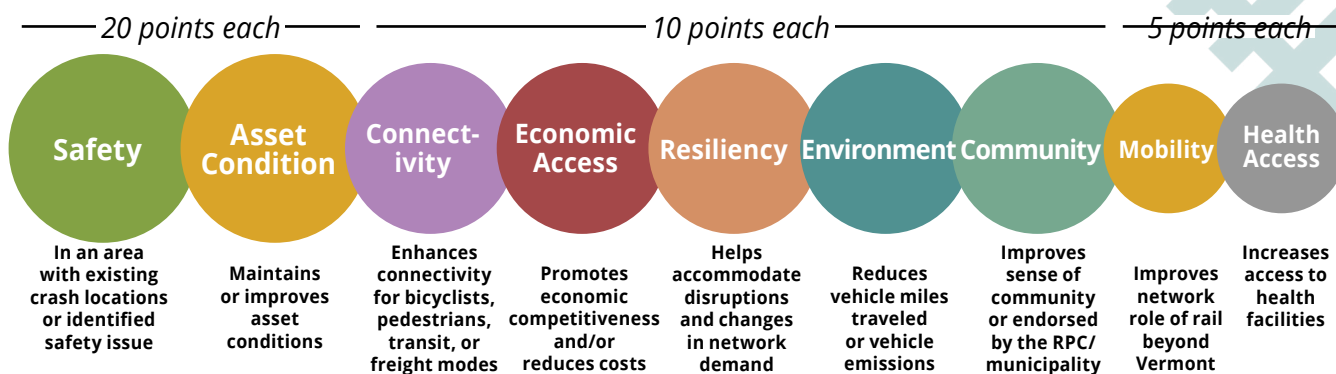
- Safety
- Asset Conditions
- Mobility & Connectivity
- Economic Access
- Resiliency
- Environment
- Community

Stay tuned for the draft tech memo, published on the [web page](#). We'll explore details of the table and a short set of initiatives in the next newsletter and round of outreach. The final table will be in the Rail Plan.



Many are excited that the Middlebury Rail & Tunnel project is on schedule to wrap up in 2021. It is important to consider smaller-scale initiatives as well to be realistic in the Rail Plan.

Initiatives will be scored using criteria consistent with VPSP2 (see below). The team will consider cost and other qualitative factors as well.



Freight Plan Advisory Committee Discusses Trends and Issues

The Freight Plan Advisory Committee (FPAC) held their first meeting on October 22nd.

Representatives from state agencies, municipal organizations, private firms, and federal/international entities took part in the virtual event. Participants bring expertise in freight, logistics, transportation, economic development, and commerce.

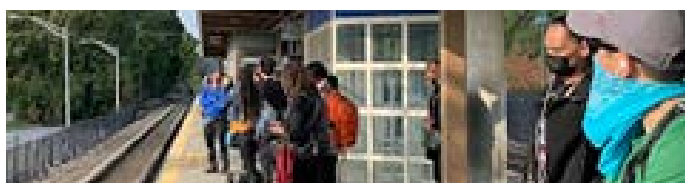
Key issues span shipper access to rail, truck chain-up locations, freight trends during the health crisis, and

rail and highway safety.

The group shared contacts and sources of information and strategized ways to collaborate.

This was a highly engaging and informative FPAC discussion, and we look forward to forging our partnership as the [Freight Plan](#) takes shape.

If you have questions about the FPAC, contact Dave Pelletier at dave.pelletier@vermont.gov.



The Life Cycle of a Comment

The [previous newsletter](#) introduced the interactive map that is helping to gather stakeholder feedback on Vermont's freight and rail resources.

The public submits a comment (and, if they'd like, pictures) on this [crowdsourcing tool](#). Once AOT staff review, they publish the input for others to see, and share with the consultant team.

The team maintains a master comment log where feedback received verbally, in writing, and via the website is kept. Our team uses that input to help identify potential initiatives for inclusion in the Plans.

We appreciate all who have shared their thoughts. Rail and freight impact every element of Vermont life, from business operations, to environmental concerns and opportunities, to transportation options, and building and maintaining a robust economy.

Fa-la-la-log in to the Town Hall on December 17th

Take some time from your holiday activities to join the last Town Hall of 2020, from your home.

The first meeting focused on identifying needs and issues (view it [here](#)). At our second Town Hall, we'll review initiatives and screen them into an implementation table. Please save the date!

Thursday, December 17th | 4:00–5:30 PM

Click below to access the event.

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Connect with the Team

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