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Introduction

This report investigates the feasibility of relocating the state owned railroad yards in the cities of Burlington and Rutland, responding to a mandate from the Vermont State Legislature. During the 1999 legislative session, House Bill 537 was passed. Section 12 of this bill directs the Agency of Transportation to study the feasibility of relocating the Rutland City and Burlington railroad yards and to develop a list of proposed sites for each yard and their associated cost estimates. The feasibility of relocating the two yards is based on specific criteria identified in the legislation and incorporates input from the regional planning groups in the area and the operating railroad companies. The final report is hereby submitted to the Agency of Transportation (VTrans) to the Vermont Rail Council and the Vermont House and Senate Committees on Transportation.

Background

The State of Vermont owns both the Burlington and Rutland railyards. These two facilities were acquired by the State in 1962 when Vermont entered the railroad business by purchasing the former Rutland Railroad. The Rutland Railroad had been shut down in 1961 due to a walkout following a stalemated 1960 strike. To preserve this important piece of transportation infrastructure, the state stepped in and purchased the property. In October 1963, a new privately held railroad, the Vermont Railway (VTR), was incorporated. The VTR was awarded the right to operate service over the state owned line between Burlington and Bennington. The first VTR train operated on the Burlington to Rutland segment of the railroad in January 1964. This was a significant day in railroad history as it was the first time a privately held railroad operated over a state owned line.

The Burlington and Rutland railyards are important to the overall operation of the VTR. Both of these yards contain facilities supporting administrative, shipping, storage, operations, and maintenance functions for the 125-route mile railroad. The railroad operates from White Creek, New York to its terminus in Burlington to the north. At its Rutland

facility, Vermont Railway connects with the Clarendon & Pittsford (CLP) that provides a route to the Delaware & Hudson Railroad (D&H) via Whitehall, New York. A connection with the Green Mountain Railroad Corporation (GMRC) is also provided in Rutland. The GMRC operates to Bellows Falls and a connection with the New England Central Railroad (NECR). Figure 1-1 illustrates the relationship of the Burlington and Rutland railyard facilities to the overall rail system in the state.

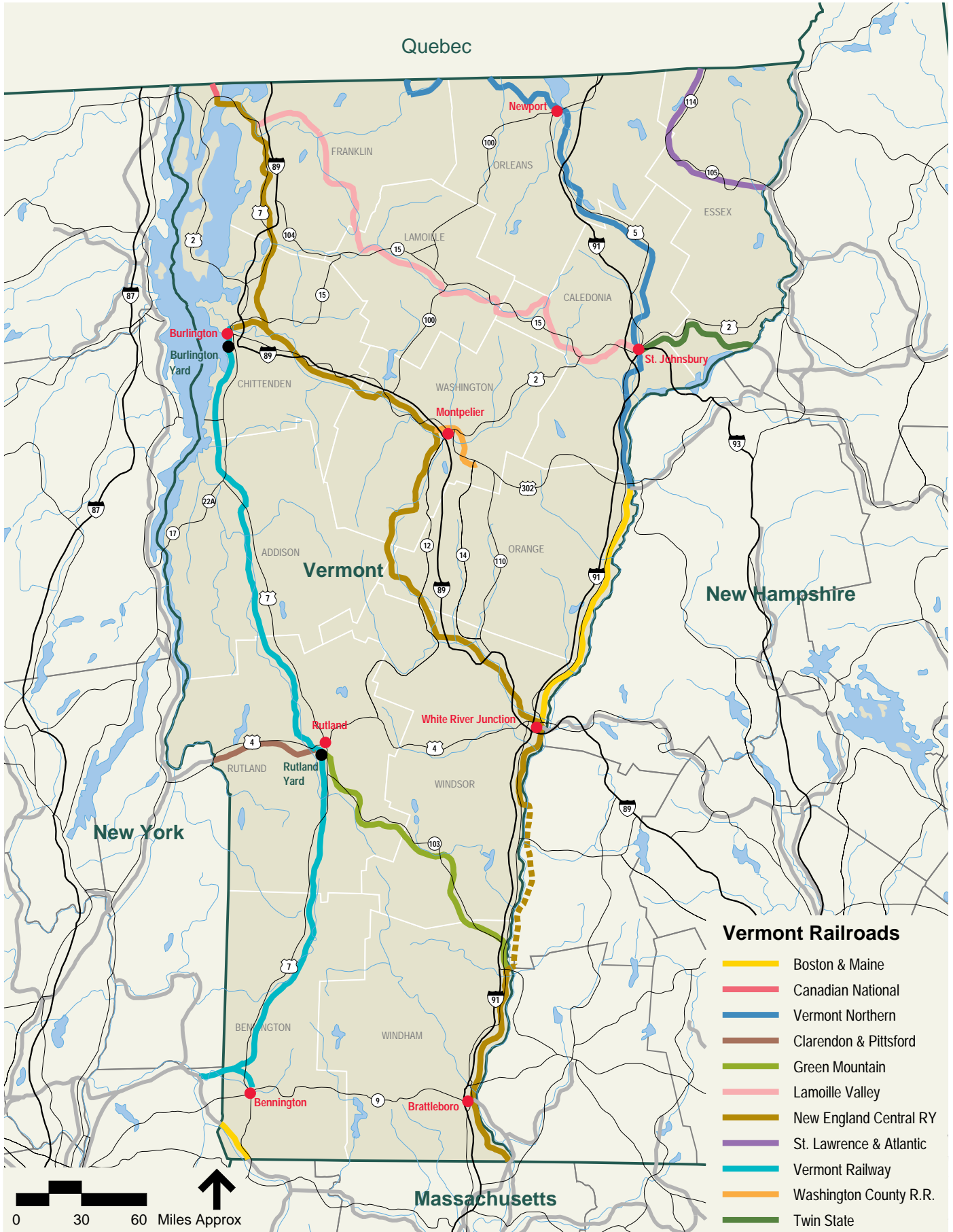
The Burlington railyard is located on the waterfront of Lake Champlain at the west end of the downtown area. The railyard in Rutland is located in the downtown. There has been significant interest expressed by representatives of both Burlington and Rutland to relocate the railyards. It is felt that the relocation of these facilities could potentially open the existing properties to redevelopment opportunities more in keeping with the economic and land use goals of the communities.

Study Purpose

The purpose of the study is to develop a list of candidate sites, evaluate the potential sites based on the criteria identified by the legislature, and identify order of magnitude capital costs associated with the proposed relocations.

Several major issues are associated with the potential relocation of the railyards. One issue is the costs associated with the relocation. Potential federal funding sources are limited so that the majority of the cost would most likely be shouldered by the State. Another issue associated with the proposed relocation would be environmental mitigation of the existing railyards. If the existing site were to be redeveloped, it would likely require environmental mediation. The costs of this clean up would be the financial responsibility of the State of Vermont. Finally, the selection of a potential railyard site must consider each of the criteria defined by the legislature.

Figure 1.1 Vermont Railroads



Study Process

The study process consisted of five major tasks including:

- Description of the infrastructure and operation of existing facilities,
- Development of the evaluation criteria,
- Identification of the candidate sites,
- Analysis of the sites including development of order of magnitude capital cost estimates, and
- Summary of the next steps required including environmental and funding considerations.

The process also consisted of stakeholder outreach including meetings with a project advisory committee and individual meetings with representatives of VTR and VTrans.

Advisory Committee

To assist in identifying potential railyard sites, an Advisory Committee of local and regional officials was developed to provide input into the study. The following organizations were represented on the Advisory Committee:

- City of Burlington
- New England Central Railroad
- Vermont Railway
- The Village of Essex Junction
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission
- Rutland Redevelopment Authority
- City of Rutland
- Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

Through advisory committee meetings and direct one-on-one interviews, the project team was able to incorporate the first-hand knowledge committee members had to offer. While there is an abundance of data and statistics available, the experience of those living and working within the two communities was invaluable to the process.

Report Organization

This report presents the findings of the Railroad Yard Relocation Site Evaluation Study. It documents the function of the existing facilities, the identification and screening of potential railyard sites, and provides a

summary of the next steps in the relocation process. The information is contained in five chapters and a technical appendix. Chapter 2 documents the infrastructure and operations of the existing railyards in Burlington and Rutland. The development of the evaluation criteria is presented in Chapter 3. The fourth chapter presents the identification and analysis of the sites considered for the relocation of each facility. The fifth and final chapter discusses the financial and environmental considerations of advancing this study through the construction of the new railyard.