

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 29, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We write to express our support for the Vermont Agency of Transportation's (VTrans) application for a Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant (CRISI; CFDA #20.325). We are pleased to bring this proposal to your attention.

VTrans is partnering with the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad (SLR), as well as the transportation agencies in New Hampshire and Maine, to complete a 15-year effort to upgrade its tracks to handle modern, 286,000-pound loaded railcars. This project is crucial for SLR, which operates 162 miles of tracks from the U.S.-Canadian border through Vermont's economically disadvantaged Northeast Kingdom to Lewiston/Auburn, Maine, as it will enable the railroad to serve businesses better by providing competitive shipping and a supply chain alternative to trucking. As energy costs continue to rise, SLR acts as a reliable carrier to ship goods more economically and attract new businesses to grow the rural economy. Increased shipping by rail also helps reduce Vermont's carbon footprint, wear and tear on highways, and heavy truck traffic in towns and villages.

With the requested funding, VTrans will work with SLR and transportation agencies in Maine and New Hampshire to install 18 miles of new 115# continuous welded rail to replace non-controlled, jointed rail that is over 100 years old, prone to failure, and cannot handle modern, fully loaded freight cars. VTrans will also install 11 switches and 3,500 ties and rebuild three public grade crossings, including new ballast and surfacing. These upgrades will maintain SLR as the only interchange connection to the rail lines owned by the States of New Hampshire and Maine. The ability to ship 286,000-pound railcars on a new, reliable line will support industrial development and job growth throughout the rural regions of northern New England, which have lost industrial and manufacturing jobs. This is the final work needed to complete SLR's modern, heavy-haul rail freight corridor.

Thank you for giving this application the careful consideration it deserves. If we can provide further evidence of our support for this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senator



PETER WELCH
United States Congressman