

From: Searles, Brian [Brian.Searles@vermont.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2016 12:46 PM
To: Kunin, Lisa; Cole, Chris
CC: Songhurst, Karen
Subject: Fw: Attached
Attachments: The Vermonter.docx

Categories: (none)

Attached is a report addressed to Governor Shumlin concerning the efforts to return Montreal rail service. Thanks

Brian

From: outlook_4d711320887d1344@outlook.com<outlook_4d711320887d1344@outlook.com> on behalf of brianrsearles@comcast.net<brianrsearles@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2016 12:40:30 PM
To: Searles, Brian
Subject: Attached

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

October 26, 2016

To: The Honorable Peter Shumlin, Governor of Vermont

From: Brian R. Searles

Subject: History of Efforts to Restore Rail Service to Montreal

In August, 2015 you appointed me to serve as your emissary for an effort to restore rail service on *The Vermonter* to Montreal, P.Q. At about the same time Premier Coulliard, per agreement appointed Raymond Chretien to serve in a similar role on behalf of the Province of Quebec.

Much groundwork has been done and several key events are poised to happen depending in large part on national election results.. To a lesser extent, the election of your successor is important to the continued success of this effort as both candidates have signaled support for the extension of service.

The project has paused until after the election as both the Canadian and Quebec governments along with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Amtrak are hesitant to commit resources when the U.S. Congress has been reluctant to pass simple enabling legislation to allow *Preclearance* of passengers and baggage by our CBP in Canada. In the following bullet points I am listing what has been accomplished (Progress) thus far followed by a "to do list"(Pending). As my continued role, if any, in this project is uncertain I thought it would be good for you and your team to be able to brief the "transition team" of the Governor-elect.

Progress

- The establishment of personal relationships and ongoing discussions with all partners including: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Canadian Border Services Agency, Canadian National Railroad, Amtrak, New England Central Railroad, Via Rail, Ministry of Transport Quebec, the states of New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut, the government of Canada, the City of Montreal and other interested parties.
- Presentations in Canada and the United States by Mr. Chretien, his staff and myself to various border trade and tourism groups to keep them informed of efforts in both countries. Communication with rail advocacy groups such as the Vermont Rail Advisory Council and the Vermont Rail Action Network has been maintained.
- Along with Secretary Cole, other cabinet members and business groups such as the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, we worked to support Senator Leahy and the rest of Vermont's delegation in their efforts to gain bipartisan sponsors for needed enabling legislation for preclearance of passengers with Canada.

- The introduction of S. 2612 and H.R. 4657, “Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act of 2016” to enable the two countries border agents to operate on either side of the border.
- The introduction of Bill C-23, “An Act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States” in the House of Commons of Canada.
- The joint announcement by President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau of support for preclearance and the specific mention of the Montreal rail service as one of three priority projects following the passage of needed legislation.
- Development of a plan to assess needed infrastructure improvements on the rail infrastructure between Alburg, VT and Montreal and to further the planning and engineering of a preclearance facility at Montreal Central Station.
- An agreement among the parties to meet in Montreal to discuss project development reflecting the unanimous agreement that this project should go forward.

Pending

- The passage of enabling legislation in the U.S. Despite numerous co-sponsors from both political parties our bill languishes. It will likely take a change in the control of the Senate for continued progress. It is noteworthy, however, that both Leahy staff and top DHS officials are hopeful that something might happen in the “lame duck” session of Congress. The dynamics are hard to read, however, as two of our Republican co-sponsors, Senators Ayotte and Johnson are in tough reelection campaigns. What will be there level of motivation in the “lame duck” session? It’s hard to say.
- The passage of similar legislation in Canada. This is moving along at a normal pace and it’s passage is not currently in doubt.
- The determination of exact costs of infrastructure improvements in Canada and agreement as to who pays for what. A meeting scheduled for October 19 was postponed until early in 2017 due to the lack of enabling legislation.
- Negotiations with Amtrak and the states of Massachusetts and Connecticut as to amended operating agreements and related costs allocations for the new service.

This is groundbreaking work as it incorporates preclearance for land, rail and marine entry into our two countries by citizens of the other for the first time and also enables additional preclearance facilities for airports such as Billy Bishop in Toronto and Jean Lesage in Quebec City. Most of the cost of improvements to facilitate this important service will be borne by the Canadians and the current governments of both Canada and the Province of Quebec consider this work to be of utmost importance. If Secretary Clinton is elected President and the U.S. Senate shifts to Democratic control the stars should be aligned for significant progress.

I thank you sincerely for the opportunity to serve in this role, I only wish we'd had more cooperation in Congress and there was even more progress to report.