

From: Searles, Brian [Brian.Searles@vermont.gov]
Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2016 11:09 AM
To: Kunin, Lisa; Cole, Chris
CC: Songhurst, Karen; Boomhower, Michele
Subject: Fw: att.
Attachments: Vermonter Extension Report.docx

Updated to reflect passage of preclearance legislation.

From: briansearles@comcast.net <briansearles@comcast.net>
Sent: Thursday, December 15, 2016 11:01 AM
To: Searles, Brian
Subject: att.

December 15, 2016

To: The Honorable Peter Shumlin, Governor of Vermont

From: Brian R. Searles

Subject: History of Efforts to Restore Rail Service to Montreal (Updated)

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 has resulted in significant progress just last week with the passage of the Promoting Travel, Commerce and National Security Act of 2016 by the United States Congress. The passage of this bill, authored by Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, is the opening of a pathway to the overall success of the project as none of the complex discussions that must follow could happen without this enabling legislation.

The following bullet points list what has been accomplished (Progress) thus far followed by a "to do list" (Pending).

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 passage of the legislation was the last act of the lame duck session on December 10.**
- 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 Alburgh, 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 Canada. With the passage of Preclearance legislation in the US, this bill is getting increased attention in the Canadian Parliament and it's passage is anticipated soon.
- The determination of exact costs of infrastructure improvements in Canada, cost-sharing and construction schedule. A meeting scheduled for October 19, 2016 was postponed until early in 2017 due to the lack of enabling legislation. I have heard from Amtrak and the Province of Quebec that they are anxious to have these discussions.
- 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 likely 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. Vermont should continue to be at the table.

