

Burlington–Essex Commuter Rail Project

Burlington, Vermont

(November 2002)

Description

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is proposing improvements to the existing rail infrastructure to allow for commuter rail service between Burlington and Essex Junction. The proposed project involves construction of track and structure improvements along the approximately eight-mile Winooski Branch of the New England Central Railroad, on the existing alignment and within the right of way in the cities/towns of Burlington, Winooski, Colchester, Essex and the Village of Essex Junction. New stations are proposed at Barlow Street, Winooski, in the vicinity of Fort Ethan Allen/Woodside Drive on the Colchester/Essex line, Pearl Street, Essex Junction, on Park Street at the Essex Junction “Wye”, and at the IBM facility. The Chittenden County Transit Authority (CCTA) will provide feeder bus service to each station. The Burlington to Essex commuter rail service will continue the existing Charlotte to Burlington commuter rail service using existing equipment and maintenance facilities.

The total capital cost for the Burlington–Essex Commuter Rail project is estimated at \$25.2 million (escalated dollars), with a proposed Section 5309 New Starts share of \$19.4 million. Because the proposed New Starts share is less than \$25 million, the project is exempt from the New Starts criteria, and is thus not subject to FTA’s evaluation and rating (49 USC 5309(e)(8)(A)).

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Burlington–Essex Commuter Rail Project
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$25.2 million
Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$YOE):	\$19.4 million (77%)

The project includes a proposed Federal share of 77 percent in Section 5309 New Starts funding. The Administration is seeking legislation that would limit the Federal New Starts share to no more than 50 percent beginning in FY2004.

Status

The Vermont Agency of Transportation, in cooperation with the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Agency, conducted a feasibility study of the Burlington–Essex Commuter Rail Project. On March 20, 2002, the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) selected the Burlington–Essex Commuter Rail project as the Locally Preferred Alternative and included it in its long range transportation plan. FTA approved this project to initiate Preliminary Engineering in September 2002. The Vermont Agency of Transportation is currently undertaking the environmental review phase for the proposed project and will be completed by Spring 2003.

The Burlington-Essex Commuter Rail project was authorized in TEA-21 in Section 3030(c)(1)(A) (vi). Through FY 2002, Congress has appropriated Section 5309 New Starts funds in the amount of \$6.9 million for this project.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
<u>Proposed Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funding</u> <u>(\$ millions)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal:		
Section 5309	\$19.4	77.2%
Section 5309 Bus	\$0.72	2.86%
State:		
Local:		
Match – State - Funding	\$5.0	19.9%
Total:	\$25.1	100.0%

NOTE: Funding proposal reflects assumptions made by project sponsors, and are not DOT or FTA assumptions. Total may not add due to rounding.

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