

Vermont's Western Transportation Corridor is a system of highway and rail projects configured around US Route 7 and the Vermont Railway main line. In order to upgrade the rail line to a condition that is competitive for economic development, the State needs to:

- Identify sources of non-Federal matching funds that reduce the burden on the Vermont taxpayer.
- Identify additional capital funds from private and Federal sources in order to carry implementation beyond the currently-planned annual increments.
- These goals are best accomplished through nurturing public-private partnerships.

The Gateway Rural Improvement Pilot (GRIP™) promotes the timely and efficient improvement of the rail components of the Western Corridor. Four elements are combined into a single project supported by a freight mobility safety and security system. These include: The Middlebury Spur, the Rutland Railyard Relocation, ABRB-E and the St. Albans Intermodal Connector. By pursuing these rail improvements through GRIP, the State will benefit by:

- Crediting \$22 million in private sector user fees as non-Federal match for the Western Rail earmark. **This will save the State approximately \$1.9 million in matching funds currently budgeted for the Western Corridor in FY07.**
- The user fee match will cover the full \$30 million earmark plus an additional \$58 million in future funding.
- Expediting the Middlebury Spur by providing a non-profit platform for the financial agreement required for a RRIF loan.
- Engaging a team of public-private partners to identify future funding sources to speed project completion.

Gateway Rural Improvement Pilot Association, Inc. (GRIP, Inc.) has been incorporated to serve as the project interface and financing platform for the GRIP Pilot. It is advantageous that the Pilot be a non-profit corporation because it provides a neutral "third party" forum to facilitate the collaboration between public and private partners. A prime example is the developing RRIF loan agreement being negotiated between Omya and Vermont Railway, which the parties agree should flow through a non-profit.

Further, GRIP, Inc. will be dedicated to pursuing future funding opportunities without making additional demands on VTrans staff resources, which are fully committed to supporting the annual work plan for project development. The GRIP partners secured the \$30 million earmark. The total estimated cost for full build-out of the Western Corridor is \$175 million. The GRIP partners secured \$22 million in private sector non-Federal match. GRIP will work in partnership with VTrans to seek both the additional Federal funding needed and private sector match to minimize the burden on Vermont taxpayers.

GRIP, Inc.'s five-member board of directors includes:

Francis J. Heald, President
Rutland City

William G. Cioffi
St. Albans

Thomas W. Huebner
Rutland City

Melinda L. Moulton
Burlington

Craig Newton
Middlebury

GRIP Municipal Advisory Council

(Initial membership)

John Tenny, Chairman
Chairman, Middlebury Select Board

Sharon Davis
President, Rutland City Board of Aldermen

Mary Garceau
City Manager, St. Albans

Michael Monte
Community Development Director, Burlington

GRIP Regional Development Corporation Advisory Council

(Initial membership)

Tim Smith, Chairman
Exec. Dir., Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation

William McGrath
Exec. Dir., Rutland Economic Development Corporation

Jamie Stewart
Exec. Dir., Addison County Industrial Development Corporation

GRIP Regional Planning Advisory Council

(In development with these initial supporters)

Scott Johnstone,
Exec. Dir., Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Mark Blucher
Exec. Dir., Rutland Regional Planning Commission

GRIP Advocates

Vermont Rail Advocacy Network (VRAN)

- Non-profit corporation supporting upgrade of the Vermont rail system for both passengers and freight.
- Represents a statewide membership of 1,800 including businesses with interests in freight rail and individuals advocating for passenger service.
- VRAN is chaired by Andréa Sisino, a GRIP, Inc. incorporator.

Environmental Interests

- The Western Rail Corridor strategy that evolved into GRIP was supported early on by The Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), The Sierra Club of Vermont, Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), and Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC).