



# **Amtrak International Operations to Canada**



*Eastern Border Transportation Coalition  
September 11, 2012*

# Overview – Five Current and Prospective Crossings

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- **Four of the Five in EBTC Arena**
  - Vermont – Quebec
  - New York – Quebec
  - New York – Ontario
  - Michigan – Ontario
- **In Service**
  - New York – Montreal “Adirondack”
  - New York – Toronto “Maple Leaf”
  - Seattle – Vancouver “Amtrak Cascades”
- **Potential Future**
  - NEC – Montreal “Vermonter”
  - Chicago – Toronto – Montreal Higher Speed Rail

# New York – Montreal “Adirondack” Initiatives

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- **Improvements Underway or in the Near Future**
  - Amtrak’s new e-Ticketing system now provides far more accurate manifests
  - Amtrak, VIA and USCBP are working on a potential process to expedite on board inspections of passengers not requiring visas
  - On behalf of Amtrak, Agence Metropolitaine de Transport has issued a RFP for a Quebec firm of architects to review the concept of prescreening facilities at Central Station for feasibility and cost
  - Amtrak assuming operational control of the CSXT Hudson Line
  - MTQ will issue a RFP for a firm to evaluate the cost of raising speeds on CN and CP lines between Montreal and the border
- **Mid-Term**
  - Introduce preclearance facility in Montreal replacing customs and immigration inspections at the border
  - Relocating customs would reduce trip time and delays by over an hour
  - Right of way improvements in Quebec and New York could further reduce trip time
  - Preclearance requires a treaty being negotiated by the *Beyond the Border Working Group* although this does not expressly provide for Montreal
  - Amtrak is leading a ridership and revenue forecasting analysis
  - The partners are drafting a business case for the facility for the Department of Homeland Security

# “Maple Leaf” Initiatives

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- **Whirlpool Rapids Bridge**

- Canadian National has obtained authorization on both sides of the border to abandon its operating rights and assets
- CN has agreed to sell its assets to Amtrak and VIA Rail Canada
- Amtrak and VIA have an agreement in principal with the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission to take over from CN
- CN has agreements in principal with Amtrak and VIA to sell the rail assets for a nominal price
- Amtrak is negotiating an asset purchase agreement with CSXT to take over their right of way assets adjoining CN

- **Niagara Falls International Railway Station and Intermodal Transportation Center**

- Letters of intent sent to the City of Niagara Falls as required by the Federal Railroad Administration to release funds
- Phase 1 for U.S. Customs House Restoration is complete
- Phase 2 for replacement of CSXT Bridge over Main Street is underway and expected to be complete in the spring of 2013
- Phase 3 for Station Construction – Ground breaking March 2013

# Prospective NEC – Montreal “Vermonters”

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- **Would connect NEC from Washington and Philadelphia plus much of New England directly with Montreal**
- **Improvements Underway**
  - New England Central Railroad (NECR) right of way upgrade substantially complete between East Northfield, VT, and St. Albans, VT
  - State of Vermont has a \$7.9 million federal grant to upgrade the NECR from St. Albans to the border for freight service but that would also make passenger service possible as far as the border
  - State of Massachusetts has a \$72.8 million federal grant to restore operations over the “Knowledge Corridor” between Springfield and East Northfield eliminating the detour via Palmer and saving 30 minutes
  - State of Connecticut has a \$190.9 million grant for improvements to the New Haven – Springfield Corridor to include partial double tracking, PTC, new interlockings, station and grade crossing improvements
- **Additional Improvements Required**
  - Right of way improvement and bridge restoration in Quebec
  - CBSA and USCBP preclearance facilities in Montreal Central Station

# Chicago – Michigan – Ontario – Toronto – Montreal

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- **An obvious missing rail passenger link between Canada and the U.S.**
- **State of Michigan and Amtrak progressively raising track speeds to 110 MPH in Michigan**
- **Current Detroit River Tunnel last handled passenger trains in 1979**
- **Current capacity limitations probably preclude passenger operation prior to the completion of the Continental Gateway rail tunnel which is not yet under construction**
- **Customs and immigration processes would need to be designed that avoid losing all the benefit of higher speeds and reduced trip time especially across Michigan**
- **Congressional Forum held in Detroit in June to review the possibilities**
- **Preliminary consideration given to one-time “Winter Classic” demonstration train**

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# Questions and Discussion