Senator Sanders Statement on the Announcement of $9 million grant to Upgrade Vermont Rail

September 5, 2013

As a member of the Transportation Sub-Committee of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, I am very pleased to welcome Federal Railroad Administrator Joseph Szabo to Vermont, and I am delighted with the U.S. Department of Transportation's announcement of a $9 million grant to upgrade Vermont's rail infrastructure. This is a welcome addition to the $52 million investment the federal government made to Vermont's rail system several years ago which allowed to make major improvements on the rail line from St. Albans to Brattleboro.

This grant will rehabilitate a 20-mile segment of track between Rutland and Leicester, allowing freight trains to carry heavier loads, operate at faster speeds, and operate more safely.

While the purpose of this grant is to improve freight service, the investment in these tracks will – hopefully – facilitate the expansion of Amtrak's Ethan Allen passenger service from Rutland to Burlington.

Today's project announcement makes sense on many levels. It will spur economic growth by providing cost-effective shipping options for Vermont businesses. It will also protect our environment by reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Trains can move a ton of freight nearly 450 miles on a single gallon of fuel. At a time when virtually the entire scientific community agrees that fossil fuel emissions are a major contributor to global climate change, this project is a small, but important step in the right direction by taking trucks off of our roads, reducing highway congestion and cutting greenhouse emissions.

Moreover, at a time when our nation is still struggling with high unemployment and reduced wages, projects like this create jobs - for engineers, architects, equipment and material suppliers, and of course, construction workers.

In fact, according to economists, investing in infrastructure is the most effective way to stimulate the economy: every billion dollars in federal funds spent on infrastructure creates nearly 35,000 jobs. And that is why I believe

we need a massive investment in our infrastructure: in rail, bridges, roads, airports, water systems and wastewater plants and in transforming our energy system. It is time to put America back to work. Making investments in our crumbling infrastructure will make our country more productive and efficient – and create a significant number of good paying jobs.