

Dear Editor,

The proposed Amtrak cuts do not make sense in an environment when the service is becoming more and more popular. In fiscal year 2008 the Vermonter for example saw a 14.8% increase in ridership. The Ethan Allen Express has also seen increased patronage.

It is absurd to think that we can continuously build more highways which inevitably lead to more sprawl, pollution and global climate change. The train offers a friendlier alternative.

Some have suggested a sink or swim policy for the railroad. However, if anything is "communist" or "socialist" it is the Interstate Highway System which has been subsidized to the tune of billions. Highways and roads have been nationalized for the last 100 years and have received over 1000 times more public funding than the passenger train system.

Over half of the North American railway system has been lifted since 1917. Despite the uneven playing field freight rail has become more and more profitable because of its inherent energy efficiency.

Like highways, there is no rail passenger line in the world that makes a profit. Governments fund them because of their utilitarian nature.

Improvements to the Vermonter or Ethan Allen Express require money. Frequency and speed are directly related to the state of the rail infrastructure. In the short term Vermont should consider raising the fares instead of cutting the service. Lighter weight rolling stock may also offer some fuel savings.

In the longer term service should be improved. The Vermonter could be rerouted to Boston to the south and once again extended to Montreal to the north. The Ethan Allen could also serve Burlington.

Yours Sincerely,

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