RESOLUTION Relating to

RESUMPTION OF AMTRAK SERVICE TO VERMONT

Sponsor(s): Councilors Hanson, Stromberg, Shannon, Paul, Carpenter, Tracy
Introduced: _________________
Referred to: _________________

___________________________

Action: _____________________
Date: _____________________
Signed by Mayor: _______________

CITY OF BURLINGTON
In the year Two Thousand Twenty …………………………………………………………………………………

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

That WHEREAS, the City Council has declared that a climate emergency exists which threatens our community and human health and safety, biodiversity, and our common environment; and

WHEREAS, emissions in Vermont have risen since 1990, with the largest increases coming from the transportation sector, which also accounts for the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions in the City and State, and the climate emergency declaration calls for the reduction of automobile miles travelled through increased mass transit use; and

WHEREAS, passenger rail is an essential low-carbon alternative to automobile and airline travel; and

WHEREAS, we see travel resuming, Amtrak resuming in other states, the airport is open, highway traffic is almost normal, and cases of COVID-19 are dropping in the regions linked by Amtrak service, thereby making now the time for a reopening plan for Vermont’s passenger trains; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak has stepped up on-board cleanliness and instituted a 50% capacity cap to insure social distancing, with on-board air being refreshed every 5 minutes, such that cases of COVID-19 in the regions linked by Amtrak are now declining, while at the same time worldwide, transit has not proven to be a vector for infection; and

WHEREAS, while business and tourism travel are down, travel to visit family and friends and travel for personal business, both of which are really important to people, continue and include visits to the Veterans Hospital in White River Junction for medical care, seeing grandchildren and transporting students returning to campus; and

WHEREAS, it is important that trains are running when people need them or long-term ridership will suffer, visitors will choose other states, and the economic value they bring won’t happen; and

WHEREAS, while we appreciate the leadership and the challenge of pandemic-era decisions for Vermont and understand the good sense of stopping the train in the height of the virus wave and loss of ridership, we now believe it is time to ask for the train’s resumption soon, with an announced resumption date or criteria even sooner;
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Burlington City Council supports the resumption of Amtrak passenger service in Vermont as soon as possible and urges the Governor and his administration to announce a date for service resumption, make a clear explanation of what criteria is needed to permit this outcome, and take any and all other steps to advance that reopening, including the revision of the Governor’s Stay at Home, Stay Safe Executive Order; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council requests the City Clerk to send a copy of this resolution to the Governor, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Vermont Rail Advisory Council.