



Message from the President.

This has been an active month. TAO's Peter Miasek and I went to Peterborough for a presentation by VIA's CEO, Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, on their High Frequency Rail proposal (HFR) - an effort to build a new dedicated track for passenger rail from Toronto to Ottawa using the abandoned Havelock rail line. We also met with Jacques Fauteux, Director of Governmental and Community Relations, about service on The Ocean, The Canadian and in Southwestern Ontario.



However, the big news is VIA's desperate need for new equipment. I've just written to Minister Garneau urging him to strongly support VIA's \$1.25B request. But we need more voices pushing the government with the same message. In a few days I'll be sending you more details on how you can help.

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Fewer trains, higher cost - VIA's Tri-weekly Ocean continues to cost more than 6 day/week service

When VIA Rail cut service on the Montreal-Halifax Ocean in half back near the end of 2012, they claimed that the move was made to reduce the cost of running the service. The Ocean, like all of VIA's services (and indeed, nearly all public transportation systems worldwide), operates at a net "loss", with subsidies required to offset the operating costs of the service. Trains like the Ocean require a somewhat higher subsidy per passenger than VIA's Corridor services, and VIA management was supposedly looking for ways to reduce spending across the system. So the Ocean was reduced from 6 day per week operation to only 3.



Two Ocean train sets sit in Halifax on a sunny day about a year before the 2012 service cut. This is now a rare sight_ only occurring when VIA runs extra trains over the holiday season. _Tim Hayman photo_

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Toronto Mayor Opts for Road Tolls to fund Transit Expansion!

The City of Toronto is facing a major budget shortfall for 2017 - both for operating costs and capital costs. The problem is not that spending is too high, but that revenues are too low. Following extensive research, City staff has identified a number of revenue options, ranging from higher residential property taxes, increased land transfer taxes, hotel tax, reinstitute

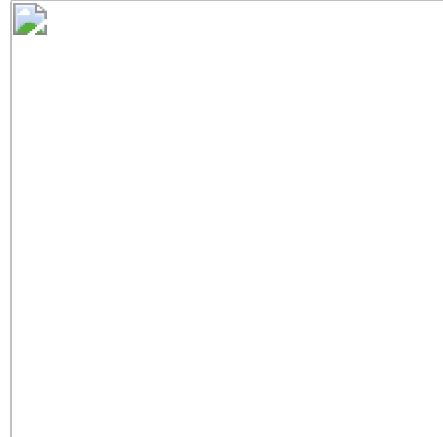
vehicle registration tax and implement expressway tolling. These will be subject to additional analysis and public consultation.

However, in a bold and remarkable speech at the Toronto Region Board of Trade on November 24 (with TAO in the audience), Toronto Mayor Tory publicly stated his preference for tolls on the Gardiner and Don Valley Expressways, raising about \$200M/yr to be dedicated for transit capital expansion. The statement caused a Canada-wide media sensation, with plenty of comments pro/con.

TAO has long supported new revenue tools for transit, especially ones like road pricing that raise revenue and incent drivers to switch to more sustainable transportation modes. We will continue to advocate for and support efforts to introduce such tools in Toronto and other Ontario municipalities

Op-Ed on New Revenue Tools for Sustainable Transportation

Transport Action Ontario (TAO) has long advocated that government needs to develop new dedicated revenue tools (taxes, fees) for investment in public transportation. As part of the Move the GTHA collaborative, we were able to publish an op-ed in the Toronto Star, Canada's largest newsletter on November 23. The article endorsed the City of Toronto's recent efforts to find new funding sources for transit. The article can be viewed [here](#).



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