



TAO questions Ontario's high-speed rail proposal, calls for replacement by a high-performance rail plan

By Robert Wightman, TAO

Will the Government of Ontario's wildly optimistic predictions about the benefits of high-speed rail (HSR) actually materialize? The odds are they will not - and here is why.

"High-speed rail's problems stem mainly from implausibly rosy economic predictions followed by deeply disappointing financial results.¹"

HSR is all too often a vanity project that politicians seem to think their ridings must have in order to consider themselves members of the 21st century. In this, HSR has proven to be much like politically-driven airport rail links, such as Toronto's controversial Union Pearson Express.

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Transport Action Ontario rejects high-speed political vanity project; calls for high-performance rail plan

By Robert Wightman, TAO

TORONTO - In a hard-hitting policy statement, the transportation advocacy group, Transport Action Ontario (TAO), is calling for the rejection of the provincial government's high-speed rail (HSR) proposal and its replacement with a more practical, high-performance rail (HPR) alternative.

"Will the Government of Ontario's rosy predictions about the benefits of HSR actually materialize?" asks TAO president Robert Wightman. "The odds are they will not. Even in countries where HSR is deemed to be a success, there are problems."

The HSR proposal endorsed by the current Government of Ontario is estimated to cost as much as \$30 billion and can't be fully built to Windsor until at least 2031. Among the points TAO finds deadly to the HSR proposal are:

1. An inability to operate at high speed between Toronto and Kitchener, where the trains must share GO's lower-speed tracks;
2. The need for high station platforms, which will boost construction costs by requiring both the high- and low-level platform HSR and GO trains;
3. The lack of a well-developed network of rail, bus and transit services to feed passengers to the HSR trains and make truly car-free travel possible; and
4. HSR's bypassing of major centres on the two existing Toronto-London passenger lines, including Brampton, Stratford, St. Marys, Oakville, Burlington, Brantford, Woodstock and Ingersoll.

Describing the government's proposed Toronto-London-Windsor HSR line as "something to satisfy the politicians' egos, much like airport rail links such as the controversial Union Pearson Express," TAO is advocating for its replacement with a better and more affordable high-performance rail (HPR) program.

HPR includes major improvements to the existing infrastructure, new trains, increased train frequency and revisions to the fare structure to provide a fast, frequent and affordable service that can be running in less than half the time of HSR at a much lower cost. Because HPR is implemented incrementally, it provides improvements the public can use every step of the way.

HPR's multiple cost and service benefits are outlined in the TAO report, This is High-Performance Rail

Says Wightman, "This is the course of urgent action TAO is advocating. Pursuing HSR after so many failed attempts in the past will only lead to further deterioration of our public transportation system, the competitiveness of our economy and our quality of life. We cannot afford to waste years on another gee-whiz scheme that is, at best, a pre-election vote chaser."

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News from Québec

By Harry Gow, TAC

1. After years of indecision by the MTQ (Québec's Ministry of Transport), the Gaspé rail corridor is getting some real money. The Liberal Government announced this spring that 100 million dollars would be spent on rehabbing the 202-mile line from Mattapédia to Gaspé. Reports from along the line are that work crews have started on some outstanding problems including two bridges that were preventing McInnis Cement's huge mill and quarry from shipping cement all the way west from Port-Daniel-Gascons (m.p. 120.6) and which meant that LM Wind Power was obliged to send Wind machine parts all the way from Gaspé by train. It would appear that this is what made Québec act. Still to be heard from is VIA Rail Canada which has been notably shy about predicting a timeline for the return of the passenger train.
2. A consortium of local interests in the Ottawa-Gatineau area called "MOOSE" has, after years of meetings, planning, and lobbying has found an investor for its ambitious plan to provide commuter train service to Ottawa and Western Québec. According to the Globe and Mail "Toronto's LeMine Investment Group - which has developed condos in Toronto and Ajax - has agreed to spend \$5-million on a 120-day study of the merits of a proposed 400-kilometre regional rail network that would connect several small communities outside Ottawa and Gatineau to the downtown core". Meanwhile the Municipality of Chelsea QC has decided to rip up its part of the track of the line that would serve the Gatineau Valley, but MOOSE has this tied up in court - for now.
3. The ambitious REM "Skytrain" public-private project proposed for Montréal by the Caisse de Dépôt seems to be advancing well but a lot remains to be clarified, say sources close to Trajectoire Québec, Transport Action's sister group.
4. Apparently, there is no estimate of how many passengers and how much money will be lost by other public transport organizations when the Skytrain network is complete. Social media and classic media outlets are reporting that neither the Caisse nor the board that runs the commuter train work has done its homework. Montréal's City transit commission has some figures, but they aren't public. Welcome to the world of public-private partnerships!

TRANSPORT ACTION CANADA NEEDS YOU!

Re: JMG-1 Locomotive

Last week, we sent out a distress message, asking members and supporters to help TAC avoid disaster. Transport Action Canada is the owner of a JMG-1 locomotive, from the Québec Central Railway. We accepted this donation on behalf of Le Groupe TRAQ and in order to donate it to a railway museum south of Québec City.

Unfortunately, there have been difficulties making the transfer to the museum and the locomotive has been stored on a MTQ (Québec's Ministry of Transportation) lot while we waited for critical rail infrastructure needed to move the locomotive was repaired. Unfortunately, late this spring, the locomotive was the site of an act of criminal vandalism and theft. Thieves broke into the lot and attempted to steal copper and other metal pieces off of the locomotive. Due of this theft and vandalism, there was a waste spill from the locomotive that contaminated the soil surrounding it. Transport Action Canada was responsible for the spill and was helped by Le Groupe TRAQ in managing the cleanup. We are very thankful for their help, however we are now in a dire situation, owing over \$30,000 for the cleanup costs.

This is why we desperately need your help.

Can you donate \$20, \$50, \$100, or even more to help us pay this debt and keep us from closing up shop?

[Click here NOW to donate now to the JMG-1 Environmental Cleanup Fund!](#)



Tim Hayman prior to boarding VIA 15 in Halifax.

**[Tim Hayman](#)
Transport Action Canada's New Vice-President**

Tim originally hails from eastern Ontario, having grown up within sight of the busy CN/VIA mainline between Montreal and Toronto. He moved to the east coast in 2007 to attend St. Francis Xavier University, and then made the move to Halifax in 2011 to pursue further education at Dalhousie University. Tim has lived in Halifax since, and works as a biologist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. An avid railfan and frequent rail traveller, Tim became actively involved with Transport Action when service cuts and potential track abandonment threatened VIA

Rail's Ocean train between Halifax and Montreal. He has served on the boards of both Transport Action Atlantic and Transport Action Canada since 2014. Tim remains dedicated to the fight for convenient, affordable, and sustainable public transportation, especially passenger rail, throughout Canada.

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