



Dear ,

Please find below our December electronic newsletter. We welcome any comments or feedback. And Seasons Greetings to all!

Is the Government Giving The Canadian a Slow Death?

When VIA was created, there were two transcontinental trains, one on CN tracks and The Canadian, on CP. They ran daily. Then the government cut completely the one on CP (through Calgary) and shifted The Canadian name to the train running on CN tracks.

Then service was cut to three days a week, then to two in the winter months and now to two all-year round. This is really unacceptable. In addition, the train used to take three days to Vancouver, then three and a half (still almost always late), and now another 18 hours have been added to the schedule. It is still sometimes late, sometimes early.

There is now no reliable train service for residents of Western Canada. Objectively, The Canadian has been reduced to a very slow moving tourist train. If this continues, is the next move once a week and then a final Good Bye?

There are many reasons for this deteriorating service:

- CN has always given priority to its freight customers,
- With the recent practice of doubling the length of freight trains they no longer fit into the sidings which results in VIA passenger trains sitting for hours watching as the freights go by on the one main line,
- To save maintenance costs and local property taxes the railways actually reduced the number of passing sidings and sections of double tracks where they existed,
- The increase in oil shipments by rail and strong grain exports are keeping CN and CP tracks full, at least until new pipeline capacity is built, and
- Most politicians in both Conservative and Liberal governments have not cared - they fly or drive.

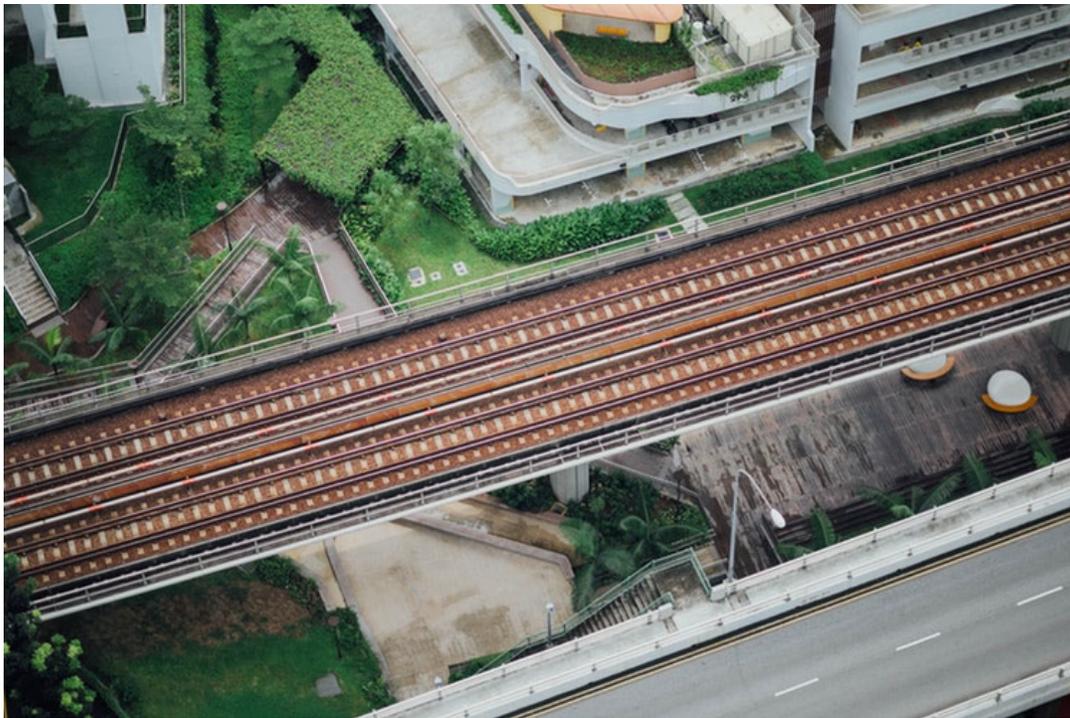
What can be done?

A. Reroute The Canadian for the Toronto to Winnipeg segment onto the CP main line north of Lake Superior and off of CN. Here is an article from Transport Action's website that shows the advantages of switching to CP.

B. Depending on negotiations with CP, continue The Canadian on the CP line all the way to Vancouver, picking up Regina, Calgary and other southern centres, OR at Regina head northwest to pick up the main CN line to Vancouver thus keeping Saskatoon and Edmonton on the route of The Canadian. Obviously an even better solution may be to split the train at Winnipeg and use both CN and CP routes to Vancouver.

C. In the US, by law, Amtrak has priority over all freight trains on their shared tracks. This encourages the freight railways to minimize delays and treat passengers fairly. VIA has no such priority.

D. None of this is to criticize VIA which has made a strong effort to improve onboard service levels year after year in the past four years and finally has received approval to buy new trains, but only in the corridor.



On Our Reading List:

- [Ontario's 2018 Fall Economic Statement - Mixed Signals on Transportation:](#) On November 15, Ontario released its 2018 Fall Economic Statement (FES). It is a large document covering all aspects of the Province's operations. Transport Action Ontario has prepared a short review of the various transportation aspects, which you can view by clicking the hyperlink.
- [Lac-Megantic Rail Disaster - New Book Discusses Regulatory Failure:](#) Almost all Canadians will remember the Lac Megantic disaster in July, 2013, involving a runaway Montreal, Maine and Atlantic (MMA) freight train loaded with volatile crude oil that derailed and exploded, with 47 fatalities. Although Transport Action's mandate is passenger rail, the obvious connections with freight rail means that we monitor this field in such areas as infrastructure and safety. A review of this new book by Dr.

Bruce Campbell, a long time friend of Transport Action, can be found on our website.

- [Alternatives Added to EA for High Speed Rail](#): Our colleagues in Southwestern Ontario, InterCityRail, have issued a notice that Ontario Transportation Minister Yurek has instructed the Ministry to add alternatives to High Speed Rail in the Environmental Assessment study currently underway. TAO is pleased with this news, as it is consistent with our own advocacy over the years.
- [Canadian's Bombardier leads bids for 999 car New Jersey rail deal](#): Canada's Bombardier Inc is the front-runner to win a New Jersey Transit (NJT) rail car contract, two sources familiar with the matter said. The order for up to 999 multilevel passenger cars, including options, would be one of the largest contracts in years if most of the options are exercised.
- [Ontario transit update: Hamilton LRT, GO extension, Bombardier LRV assembly](#): Hamilton's LRT is to extend from McMaster University in the west end to Eastgate Square shopping mall in the eastern part of Hamilton. Metrolinx has confirmed that planned construction of the Confederation GO Train station on Centennial Parkway in east Hamilton will proceed as planned.

We have many updates that are being finalized. When they are all done and ready to be shared, we will send you the full scoop about it in our next emails.

Bruce Budd

Bruce Budd, President
Transport Action Canada

P.S: Transport Action relies entirely on membership dues and donations to fund its advocacy work on sustainable public transportation. Please assist us with a donation.

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