

This newsletter is produced by Transport Action Canada for all members of the Transport Action family. If you are a member of Transport Action Atlantic, Ontario, Prairies or BC, you are automatically a member of Transport Action Canada. The regional organizations have chosen to issue a joint electronic newsletter covering all of Canada.



TRANSPORT ACTION
CANADA

Dear ,

With a minority government in Ottawa, heightened awareness of the need for environmentally-friendly travel, and an emphasis on ending the isolation of rural and indigenous communities, the next few years represent one of the best opportunities to restore and strengthen passenger rail and connecting bus services.

With your support, we'll be reaching out to both ministers and critics as this new parliamentary mandate starts, setting out [Transport Action's priorities](#) to restore services and reconnect communities across Canada.

We have a simple message for the government and opposition parties: **Reverse all the cuts since 1979!** This would put Canada back on the path to *being a country united by train.*

The ministers and critics appointed for the 43rd parliament include:

Minister of Transportation: The Hon. Marc Garneau
Critics: Todd Doherty (Conservative) Nikki Ashton (NDP)

Minister of Infrastructure and Communities: The Hon. Catherine McKenna
Critics: Luc Berthold (Conservative) Taylor Bachrach (NDP)

Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development: The Hon. Maryam Monsef
Critics: Karen Vecchio (Conservative, *Women and Gender Equality*) Bernard Généreux (Conservative, *Rural Economic Development*) Lindsay Mathysen (NDP, *Women and Gender Equality*) Alistair MacGregor (NDP, *Rural Economic Development*)

The combination of the roles of *Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development* is particularly relevant to Transport Action's work,

because rural women and indigenous women suffer disproportionately when safe, reliable and affordable public transportation is not available.

Notably, Todd Doherty is the MP for Cariboo-Prince George and Luc Berthold represents Mégantic-L'Érable, so we expect the government to be held to account over rail safety and providing safe travel options for all Canadians.

New Long-Distance Equipment Needed



One of the first decisions the new government must take is to purchase new long distance equipment to replace the worn-out *Renaissance* sleeping cars used in Eastern Canada. According to statements from VIA Rail's annual meetings, the *Rens*, which haven't held up well in the Canadian climate, will all be withdrawn by 2021. There are only a handful of 1955 stainless steel *Chateaux* sleeping cars available, and those do not offer any accessible accommodation. Some of the *Chateaux* are already standing in the *Rens* damaged in incidents last year.

An order for replacement equipment really needed to be made *last year* and *right now* would be the next best thing. An order for 27 new stainless steel sleepers and three dining cars would allow VIA Rail to offer fully accessible accommodation across all of its long distance routes, plus the opportunity to introduce new options like four-berth family cabins and lower-priced couchettes to cater for a wider variety of passengers.

We had a good response to our campaign to write letters to federal election candidates about this issue, so we've updated the campaign to contact newly-elected MPs and maritime MLAs. Your voice will help us get this done.

[Write to Your MP](#)

Highball for High Frequency Rail

Almost as soon as the election was over VIA Rail announced the appointment of Vernon Barker to head VIA's High Frequency Rail team, and launched a new information site and video about the project. The new releases suggest that electrification is now being given additional consideration. However, the timelines suggest final approval to proceed would come in the 2021 federal budget, with a service start date around 2025.

Transport Action Canada remains vigilant about many of the aspects of the project, and will continue to make the point that having dedicated tracks in part of the Toronto-Quebec City corridor will only be really effective in combination with a new Passenger Rail Act that provides a solid legal framework VIA Rail and its relationship with host railroads, thus securing improved service frequency and reliability along existing shared tracks, which will also be required for HFR services to access Toronto Union Station and Montreal Central Station.

<https://corpo.viarail.ca/en/projects-infrastructure/high-frequency-rail>

BC Residents Call for Train to be Reinstated



Photo: Roger Puta Collection

When BC Rail's passenger service from North Vancouver to Price George was cut in 2002, the Tsal'alh First Nation was given a reprieve because rail service was deemed essential for the community. CN's Kaoham Shuttle runs 22 km from Seton to Shalalth and Lillooet. However, CN has come under increasing scrutiny for failing to operate the service regularly and reliably, so local people are protesting to the BC government, including calling for the reinstatement of passenger rail services along the entire route.

A petition to BC Premier John Horgan has now collected more than 5,000 signatories.

[Add Your Voice](#)

<https://www.trailtimes.ca/opinion/b-c-views-transportation-options-can-be-few/>

Ontario Fall Economic Outlook Confirms Provincial Direction for Public Transport

The Ontario Ministry of Finance released its Fall Economic Outlook in early November. These documents typically provide a good summary of the Province's plans, ahead of the Provincial Budget in the spring. There were few surprises in the outlook for public transportation:

- Exploring transferring responsibility for Ontario Northland from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to the Ministry of Transportation, and options to enhance inter-community bus service provided by Ontario Northland. This is consistent with our recommendations.
- The [GO Expansion Project](#) remains on schedule, and is currently in procurement.
- Work continues on the four subway projects owned by the Province totalling \$28 Billion. There is a call for the Federal Government to contribute at least 40%.
- Continued use of private sector partnerships to support transit oriented development along new subway and GO Rail corridors
- Continuing to construct the Eglinton, Finch, and Hurontario LRTs and York Viva BRT. Hamilton LRT was not mentioned.
- Continued use of Community Transportation Grants for local and inter-community bus services.
- Nominated 201 public transit projects in 51 municipalities outside Greater Toronto and Hamilton with a total eligible cost of about \$1.2B for approval by the federal government under its PTIF-II plan. This requires roughly matching contributions from both senior levels of government.

Public Consultation on GTA-West 413 underway as Ontario adds lanes to 401



Highway 401 traffic on a good day. Photo by [Danielle Scott](#)

As described in our July newsletter, Ontario has revived the Environmental Assessment for the GTA-West Expressway (Highway 413) between highways 401, 410 and 400, reversing a decision to stop the project made by the previous government in 2017.

Public consultations are now underway, and details can be found [here](#). However, the 2017 advisory panel report **has been omitted** from the background materials posted online and pulled from the MTO website.

Luckily, there's a copy of the report on the [Internet Archive](#).

Transport Action Ontario has reviewed the advisory panel report, which provides many thoughtful arguments that can be used to oppose the expressway. A new highway across green belt would divert money that would be better spent on rail, bus, LRT, and subway infrastructure and adding highway capacity only increases traffic congestion rather than reducing it.

[This review and a link to the full report is available on the TAO website.](#)

Construction also has begun to widen highway 401 between the Credit River and Milton to 10 and 12 lanes, moving the bottleneck a few miles west at a cost of about \$64 million per mile.

St. John's Transit Report Released

The final report of a comprehensive review of public transit in the City of St. John's was released on November 6. Mayor Danny Breen welcomed the in-depth look at the current system, its strategic analysis, and suggestions for continuous improvement.

Not surprisingly, the chair of the Transportation Commission, Councillor Ian Froude, said the greatest challenge would be balancing the report's recommendations with current budgetary restraints. But he was pleased to announce that Metrobus ridership year-to-date is up 10% from 2018.

Transport Action Atlantic notes there are a number of key issues that appear to be missing from the report, including linkage with provincial climate change policy, the potential for Metrobus to play a role in school bussing, and the inconsistency of the city's promotion of more parking garages in the downtown area, which is a disincentive to use public transit.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/st-johns-transit-review-1.5350736>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/weekend-briefing-metrobus-1.5352623>

Transportation Newsround

GO Transit launches \$10 Sunday passes

<https://www.gotransit.com/en/travelling-with-us/promotions-and-events/sunday-funday-with-go>

TTC eliminates tokens in favour of Presto, Fair Fares campaign ramps up.

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/11/11/ttc-fair-discount-program-offers-proof-that-cheaper-transit-can-transform-lives.html>

On-demand bus success in Cochrane, AB: COLT meeting targets for the end of 2020.

<https://www.cochranetoday.ca/local-news/colt-transit-system-wheelin-in-data-to-iron-out-kinks-1774196>

NS also exploring on-demand, seeking to "deploy permanent on-demand mobility technology services within mid-sized rural communities with populations between 15,000 to 40,000 residents."

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/ride-sharing-programs-rural-communities-1.5363972>

Local hotel provides shelter for passengers waiting at Valemount.

<https://www.therockymountaingoat.com/2019/11/refuge-for-train-travellers/>

Jennifer Keesmaat, former chief planner of Toronto, calls for road pricing.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-want-to-end-congestion-put-a-price-on-our-roads/>

British express trains winning passengers over from short-haul flights.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-50368894>

Work progressing on Stadler trains for CalTrain electrification.

https://www.progressiverailroading.com/passenger_rail/news/Caltrain-ramps-up-electrification-project--59192

First Avelia Liberty for Amtrak NE corridor rolls off the production line.

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/high-speed/first-amtrak-avelia-emerges/55182.article>

We love to hear what you think! We hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter. Reply to this email with any thoughts you may have, and your own local transport and advocacy updates.

Thanks for reading!



Terry Johnson
President, Transport Action Canada

P.S: Transport Action Canada is funded by grassroots members and donors like you. Support our mission to ensure access to bus and rail services for to all Canadians by making a contribution.

Any amount-- \$25, \$50, \$100, \$200... Even \$10 will be deeply appreciated, and makes a real impact in our ability to continue our work.

Donate Now!

Our membership is our strength. You can help by recruiting a friend to join our fight for better public transportation across Canada...

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If you prefer to send us a cheque, cheques may be mailed to:
Transport Action Canada, P.O. Box 858, Station B, Ottawa ON K1P 5P9

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