

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 ,

To say this last month has been *eventful* for railways and passengers in Canada would be something of an understatement.

Thankfully, at the time of writing, a meeting between Wet'suwet'en leaders and BC and federal government ministers has reached a tentative agreement. The majority of the railway blockades that were erected after the RCMP enforced an injunction to remove a road blockade on Wet'suwet'en territory on February 6th are now clear. CN and CP are clearing the backlog of freight trains, and VIA Rail services are getting back to normal, with all services expected to be running by Friday March 6th. Updates are being posted at <https://www.viarail.ca/en/travel-advisory-information>

**Transport Action** expressed concern that for CN to mandate the cancellation of passenger trains , with only a few hours notice and leaving many passengers stranded, on routes which were unaffected by the protests and not required for detours, only made the whole situation worse. Once again we are asking for the "commercially confidential" contract between CN and VIA Rail to be opened up to public accountability, and for the government to take a close look at ensuring the resilience of Canada's rail network. [Read our statement here.](#)

Behind these headlines, this month has seen progress on a number of new inter-city bus routes and transit initiatives, including the announcement that services between **Calgary and Regina** will be restored, and a boost for the **Gaspé** line. Scroll down to our *Transportation Newsround* section for more details.

## Tax Receipts For 2019

If you are a [member](#) of Transportation Action or made a donations to support our work in 2019 you should have received your tax receipt at the end of February by email. We send one consolidated receipt for the whole tax year to reduce paperwork, both for our volunteers and your accountant. If you haven't received

your receipt and it isn't hiding in your email program's filtered messages, or you need a paper copy, please reach out to [info@transportaction.ca](mailto:info@transportaction.ca). We're also looking into upgrading our software to make this process smoother next year. *Thank you again for your support.*

## Media Attention Focused on the Ocean



### Ocean Faces Triple Jeopardy

The Ocean train serving the Maritimes is facing multiple threats to its successful continued operation, and its ability to continue serving the public transportation needs of Canadians in the Maritimes and those who want to visit the Maritimes.

[Full Article](#)

The newly-published latest version of VIA Rail Canada's five-year Corporate Plan confirms what many public transportation advocates in the Maritimes had long suspected. As of November 1, 2020 the Crown corporation will be denied access to the loop track at the Halifax container terminal. The facility was formerly known as Halterm, but was recently rebranded PSA Halifax following its acquisition by a multinational Singapore-based company. All this means that the tri-weekly remnant of VIA's once-proud Ocean can no longer be turned on arrival in Halifax for its return journey to Montreal.

This looming deadline has created a major challenge for VIA because the nearest location where an entire train can reverse direction is the wye at Truro - 64 miles (103 kilometres) away. **Transport Action Atlantic** insists that the Government of Canada has an obligation to ensure a satisfactory resolution to this issue, given that the container terminal is actually federal government property, held under lease by the operator.

VIA has been reluctant to discuss its future plans, but regional MPs have been told that there is a so-called "solution" being proposed that involves simply running the locomotives around the train on arrival at Halifax and pulling it backwards all the way to Montreal. From what TAA has been able to learn, the scenario would use a mix of Renaissance and stainless steel cars, with economy and sleeper class passengers scattered throughout different areas of the train. The classic Park observation car - a popular feature for sleeper-class passengers for the past 30 years - would be gone, resulting in the train losing much of its appeal for higher-revenue customers. Furthermore, it would appear that most economy class passengers - and many in sleepers as well - would be forced to ride in rear-facing seats on the westbound journey, which is something many travellers find objectionable. All in all, it would represent a substantial downgrading of an already compromised service.

TAA is urging an alternative infrastructure-based solution - one that would preserve the current service standard (such as it is) while laying the groundwork for a return to daily service by the Ocean once VIA's new corridor equipment is introduced. The crux of the argument is that if the operational needs of the

container terminal require that VIA be denied access to this federally-owned facility, the Government of Canada needs to do whatever is necessary to ensure a proper and professional solution.

Thanks to the efforts of **Transport Action Atlantic**, both local and national media has begun to pick up on the potential crisis facing VIA Rail's Ocean train when the turning loop in Halifax is closed this November.

[CTV News speaks with Ted Bartlett of Transport Action Atlantic](#)

## Reprieve for Huron Central Railway



Huron Central train in Massey, Ontario - Photo: [P199](#)

Genesee & Wyoming Canada, recently acquired by Toronto-based Brookfield Infrastructure Partners, has announced that it will keep the line between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury open beyond the March 31 deadline that had been previously set. The Huron Central Railway, which supports 3,400 direct and indirect jobs and moves the equivalent of 40,000 truck loads of goods each year, needs a substantial injection of capital for repairs and grade crossing work to ensure its long-term future, which would in turn attract more shippers and economic development in the region. Negotiations with both the federal and provincial government have been ongoing throughout 2019 and the reprieve comes as a result of "notable progress" in talks with Ottawa and Queen's Park.

The **Northern and Eastern Ontario Rail Network**, an affiliate of Transport Action Ontario, has been following this issue closely, including advocating for the line to once again carry a passenger service linking Sudbury and the Sault, forming part of a network of reliable public transportation across Northern Ontario with a reinstated ONR Northlander, VIA Rail, and the Algoma Bear Train.

<https://www.saultstar.com/news/local-news/increased-optimism-in-hcr-funding-a-result-of-recent-meetings>

# Air Canada? We'd Rather Take The Train



Photo by [Tony Hisgett](#)

We don't often comment on airline issues, however the concerns that our friends at [AirPassengerRights.ca](#), expressed about the new federal compensation rules for airline passengers delayed or denied boarding, introduced on December 15th 2019, have proven to be well founded.

Rather than helping to solve the problems faced by Canadians whose lack of adequate train or bus services leaves them at the mercy of often-unreliable short-haul flights, the new rules have become yet another source of frustration. The complaints system is itself now "overbooked" with the Canada Transportation Agency deluged by more than 3,000 complaints. Air Canada is responsible for the largest number of complaints, and there are so many that cases are being "bumped" because the agency can't handle them all.

The federal agency has now launched an investigation into how the airlines are handling claims and exploiting loopholes in the new rules.

- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/air-canada-westjet-passenger-regulations-cta-1.5455807>
- <https://globalnews.ca/news/6599151/air-canada-sunwing-complaints-delay-compensation/>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/cta-delayed-flight-compensation-air-canada-complaints-1.5477539>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/cta-passengers-westjet-air-canada-compensation-flight-delay-1.5463206>

## NL Ferry Rates Rise Again

Marine Atlantic announced the 2020-21 tariff for its ferry services to Newfoundland on February 13. As widely expected, there are increases as the Crown corporation seeks to meet the 65% cost recovery target set by Transport Canada. Once again this year, the full burden is borne by commercial customers, with a 2% increase in freight transportation costs overall, plus a 3.4% hike in the drop trailer handling fee. Trucking companies are expected to simply pass along the increase to their customers, which will ultimately mean

higher prices for consumer goods on the island. The new rates take effect on April 1.

While passenger and passenger vehicle fares remain unchanged since 2018, it is noteworthy that these user costs have more than doubled in the past two decades - inflating at a rate approximately three times the cost of living index. A one-way ticket for a car and driver between North Sydney and Port aux Basques currently costs \$164.81 - including a substantial \$28 in fuel surcharges and security fees.

**Transport Action Atlantic** continues to insist that the current rate structure and cost recovery demands by the federal government violate of the spirit of the Terms of Union that brought Newfoundland and Labrador into Confederation in 1949. The ferry service was a constitutional guarantee, and was intended to cost users no more than travelling the equivalent distance on land. During the 2015 federal election campaign, the Trudeau Liberals had denounced the 65% cost recovery demand as "unreasonable", but since their election have done nothing to change it.

## Transportation Newsround

Westcar: Transportation plan first step toward practical solutions for region

<https://lfpres.com/opinion/columnists/westcar-transportation-plan-first-step-toward-practical-solutions-for-region>

Winnipeg to study regional transit beyond city limits.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-region-transportation-plan-1.5455026>

Bombardier Rail division sold to Alstom

<https://www.urbantransportnews.com/alstom-to-acquire-bombardiers-rail-business-for-usd-7-6-billion/>

REM unveils station names, except for contentious Griffintown location.

<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/rem-unveils-official-names-of-its-stations-with-one-exception-1.4810334>

BC government planning commuter rail from Metro Vancouver to Fraser Valley

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/commuter-rail-fraser-valley-vancouver>

Rider Express restarting Calgary-Regina bus service on March 13, hoping for better passenger numbers than 2018 attempt.

<https://www.cjme.com/2020/02/19/rider-express-taking-second-shot-at-regina-to-calgary-bus-route/>

Ontario Northland announces White River to Thunder Bay bus service extension

<https://www.wttw.com/news/local-news/ontario-northland-launching-new-bus-route-to-thunder-bay>

Metrolinx announces preferred route for Bowmanville GO extension

<https://blog.metrolinx.com/2020/02/13/bowmanville-rail-service-extension-option-goes-to-metrolinx-board-plan-would-see-go-service-extend-eastward-through-durham-communities/>

NL tunnel would take 15 years to build at an estimated cost of \$2bn

<https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/liberals-exploring-proposed-2-billion-tunnel-to-link-newfoundland-to-mainland>

Stratford, ON getting new buses and on-demand Sunday service with federal-provincial investment

<https://www.stratfordbeaconherald.com/news/local-news/feds-and-province-announces-3-million-in-joint-funding-for-stratford-transit-projects>

Three new regional bus routes for SW Ontario to launch on April 1st

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/rural-transit-southwestern-ontario-1.5472173>

Trudeau declines to meet with Missanabie Cree Chief Jason Gauthier over Algoma Bear Train funding

<https://saultonline.com/2020/02/pms-office-fails-to-value-first-nation-relationship-reconciliation-opportunity-through-bear-train/>

Calgary ordering more Siemens S200 LRVs to renew light rail fleet

<https://www.progressiverailroading.com/mechanical/news/Calgary-Transit-orders-15-Siemens-light-rail-vehicles--59830>

Surprise announcement of \$135 million to repair second section of Gaspé Line between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons

<https://www.gaspesienouvelles.com/article/2020/02/25/quebec-allonge-135-m-de-plus-dans-le-rail-gaspesien>

Ottawa LRT problems continue

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/lrt-ottawa-delays-broken-train-1.5477771>

Vancouver is Canada's car-sharing capital, but with Car2Go gone and Evo scaling up the last-mile ecosystem is changing

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/car-share-evo-vancouver-2020-new-era-1.5479117>

Luxembourg Makes History as First Country with Free Public Transport

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/luxembourg-free-travel-train-bus-tram-public-transport-rail-fares-ticket-a9366226.html>

UK commits to \$100bn High Speed 2 project, talks of High Speed 3 northern link

<https://www.railtech.com/infrastructure/2020/02/12/uk-government-keeps-going-hs2-and-thinks-about-hs3/>

California HSR route over Tehachapi Pass proceeds to public comment period, would cost \$18bn to build.

<https://www.kget.com/news/hotlink/high-speed-rail-authority-releases-draft-environmental-impact-report/>

Union leaders express frustration with railway underfunding after XPT crash kills two in Australia

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/feb/26/from-showpiece-to-goat-track-the-long-dangerous-decline-of-sydney-to-melbourne-rail-travel>

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...

**Join Transport Action**

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**

