

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.



Dear ,

As the Covid-19 situation has persisted, municipal transit agencies and motor coach operators across Canada have faced increasing financial pressure because even with significantly reduced passenger numbers, many of the costs of wages, fleet maintenance, and maintaining a basic level of service for essential travel and frontline workers must still be covered. A number of agencies have now resorted to layoffs, which are regrettable. Thus far, the federal government has not announced specific assistance for public transportation; **Transport Action Canada** is supporting a joint letter to the federal government from a range of advocacy groups on this issue.

There are also two online petitions started by fellow advocates that we encourage our supporters to sign: [keeptransitmoving.ca](https://www.KeepTransitMoving.ca) and [savetransit.ca](https://www.SaveTransit.ca).

Canadian motor coach operators are doing their best to keep essential services running, with medical supplies to smaller communities also often moving by bus, but the entrepreneurial Canadian businesses that have stepped up to fill the gaps left by Greyhound do not necessarily have deep pockets to see them through this time. **Transport Action Ontario** has reached out to the Ontario government to ask them to work with Kasper Transportation to maintain bus services between Thunder Bay, Winnipeg, and communities in Northwestern Ontario.

Transport Action Updates

We've been working over the past month to update our online [membership](#) and [donation](#) forms. Your memberships and donations will now be processed by *CanadaHelps* on our behalf, which reduces our administrative costs, and means more of your generous contributions can fund transportation advocacy and research. *CanadaHelps* will also provide tax receipts, freeing up Transport Action volunteers to work on education and advocacy too.

Monthly donations will now include automatic membership renewal, so please

consider making a monthly contribution to support our work.

Transport Action Atlantic's 2020 AGM, which was originally scheduled for May 2nd has been postponed due to Covid-19. The new date is expected to be sometime in October. The existing board of directors will remain in place until the rescheduled AGM can be held.

Sincerely,



Terry Johnson
President, Transport Action Canada

Vancouver Island Rail Report Released



Photo: VIA Rail RDCs at Nanaimo - [Alasdair McLellan](#)

British Columbia's Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MoTI) released a detailed assessment of the Vancouver Island rail corridor, prepared by WSP Canada, on April 28.

The report sets out a "commuter" option between Langford and Victoria, plus "intermediate" (up to four daily passenger trains) and "ultimate" options for restoring service between Victoria and Courtenay. The headline \$728 million price tag of the "ultimate" option was swiftly picked up on by the media, but a more detailed analysis of the report suggests that it provides a basis for the line to be reopened, fulfilling BC Premier John Horgan's election pledge, at a more affordable price.

Read more on our website: <https://www.transportaction.ca/regions/british-columbia/vancouver-island-railway-assessment-published/>

In Memorium: Normand Parisien

Normand Parisien, who served as Director-general of Transport 2000 Québec from 1900 until 2015 passed away in his sleep on May 4th.

After leaving Transport 2000, now Trajectoire Québec, Normand, an economist by trade, served as a political assistant to a Liberal MNA and ran as a byelection candidate in 2016. Normand was always a buoyant, positive person, and his

credibility with the politicians and the press in Montreal was immense. Normand worked closely with Luc Côté and Harry Gow in his time with Transport 2000.



Luc Côté offered the following tribute (translated by Harry Gow):

"Normand was a man with heart, passion and perseverance in facing life's challenges. Normand was a great defender of public transport. If we speak today of mobility, it is thanks to this imposing man who invested himself fully in the defence and promotion of the rights of transport users in the 1990s and beyond. From Rio to Paris, Normand was front and centre for public transport and the environment. Away from the media spotlight, Normand was a good friend, a person who would not let you fall and a great organiser of outdoor activities."

A page will be devoted to Normand in **Rail Québec**.

Requiescat in Pace, Normand.

Trillium Line and REM Construction Update

Ottawa's O-Train Trillium Line has now shut down to allow construction work to begin on Stage 2 LRT, an extension to the airport and Limebank, including a bridge over VIA Rail's main line to replace the existing flat crossing. Work is expected to take two years, with R2 bus replacement services operating until 2022.

The O-Train originally opened in 2001, using former CP tracks, at a cost of only \$21 million, with Transport Action members in Ottawa being closely involved in the initiation of the project.

Meanwhile, with restrictions on construction work being eased in Quebec, Montreal's REM project is on the move once again. On May 11th, 2020 the Mount Royal tunnel will be closed to permit work on adapting the tunnel to mini-métro standards.

Consequently, the Deux-Montagnes electric train service will be cut back to Bois-Franc with passengers expected to transfer by bus to Côte Vertu Métro station. The Mascouche line will stop at Ahuntsic, but the train will then be extended to a loop around Mount Royal to reach Central Station, and buses will carry people to Radisson Métro station. The rump of the Deux-Montagnes line will close in mid 2021 if construction remains on schedule, with REM to the south shore expected to open that year and the final phase to Dorval Airport and the West Island not expected until 2023.

Climate Action and Rail Transportation

Although Covid-19 is Canada's current crisis, our country continues to face the longer-term crisis of climate change. In March, **Transport Action Ontario** wrote

to the federal government emphasizing the critical importance of rail transportation in dealing with climate change. TAO identified six areas of concern where federal action is needed:

- VIA Rail Canada and a Passenger Rail Act
- High Frequency Rail
- Investment Incentives for Freight Railways + Updated Service Agreement
- Long-Haul Freight
- Rail Electrification
- Infrastructure Robustness

The letter can be viewed here: <http://ontario.transportaction.ca/canadas-climate-action-and-rail-transportation-policy-and-actions/>

Reducing Subway Building Costs in Toronto



As Canada emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, governments may push to expedite "shovel-ready" transport projects as part of an economic stimulus package. Controlling costs and maximizing the value created by such infrastructure investment will be essential, because governments will also be revenue constrained.

A new report issued by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO), authored by transit researcher Stephen Wickens, raises alarm bells. The report found that subway costs in Greater Toronto have increased well beyond the rate of inflation over the past two decades. The last subway project, the Toronto-York-Spadina Subway Extension, cost nearly twice as much as any earlier subway project, even when accounting for inflation, and the preliminary costs for three upcoming subway projects three times higher again. Transport Action Ontario has worked closely with both RCCAO and Wickens over the years and respects their expertise.

The report identifies 11 ways in which total costs can be reined in. Two of the largest are:

- Tunnel depths: *Look for ways to use cut-and-cover or shallow tunnels or at-grade/elevated portions.*
- Political meddling in the planning process: *Approve long-term transit plans based on evidence.*

The report can be viewed here: <https://rccao.com/research/files/RCCAO-STATION-TO-STATION-REPORT-APRIL2020.pdf>

Atlantic Region Update

Atlantic Canada has fared relatively well during the Covid-19 emergency, and the four provinces all seem determined to maintain the positive trends evident in recent weeks - particularly in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. However, travel restrictions in the region are unlikely to be relaxed anytime soon. Tight controls remain in effect on provincial boundaries, and Newfoundland and Labrador acted quickly to turn away visitors apparently intent on viewing the annual iceberg spectacle, following a number of reported sightings of out-of-province licence plates in the Bonavista area.

VIA Rail is now saying that its Ocean service - abruptly suspended on 12 March - is now cancelled indefinitely. The train crosses two provincial boundaries, representing a major obstacle to its return, even though it's arguably less of a challenge to maintain physical separation among passengers on a train than either an airplane or motor coach.

Maritime Bus has reduced its frequencies in NS, NB, and PEI to just three times a week, and DRL Coachlines in NL has suspended its operations completely. Service to the region's major airports has been greatly reduced, with some smaller airports being completely shut down. Public transit in the larger urban centres remains operational on a very limited basis, with strict controls on the number of passengers permitted on board. Further schedule reductions are set to begin in Halifax effective May 4.

Meanwhile, many questions abound as to what public transportation will look like when the restrictions are finally lifted. Transport Action Atlantic is watching the situation closely and continues to maintain dialogue with political and business influencers around the region.

You can read more on the TAA website:

<https://transportactionatlantic.ca/transportation-in-turmoil-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

Good News For Marine Atlantic



On March 26th, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that commercial shipping company Oceanex could not appeal two lower court decisions that essentially upheld the 1949 Terms of Union provisions that mandate federal support for the Marine Atlantic ferry between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Undaunted, Oceanex executive chairman Sid Hynes launched a campaign to persuade the federal government to give his operation a \$2 million/week subsidy to offset alleged Covid-19 related losses. An attempt to mobilize public opinion in his favour by raising the spectre of looming food shortages failed when the Newfoundland government said it had assurances that Marine Atlantic and the trucking industry had plenty of available capacity and the supply chain was in no danger. After some consideration, Ottawa denied the subsidy request.

The good news in all of this is that Oceanex has now exhausted all legal avenues to influence Marine Atlantic subsidies. However, **Transport Action Atlantic** maintains that ferry rates are still inconsistent with the intent of Term 32, and will continue to maintain political pressure for a rollback to more reasonable levels.

The full SCC ruling can be found here: <https://decisions.scc-csc.ca/scc-csc/scc-l-csc-a/en/item/18224/index.do>

Ontario Northland Progress

We were pleased to hear that, on April 1, Ontario Northland Transportation Commission was transferred to be under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation rather than the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. **Transport Action Ontario** has long advocated for this change, as it should result in more government attention to passenger rail in Northern Ontario, and better coordination with Metrolinx.

As readers will know, Ontario Northland has been studying the resumption of passenger rail service between Toronto and Northern Ontario. We have now been told that a plan has been developed and well-received by the Province, and we expect an announcement in conjunction with the Fall economic statement.

Transportation Newsround

CTV News coverage of the Vancouver Island report, including interviewing Island Corridor Foundation CEO Larry Stevenson:

<https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=1951241&binId=1.1180928&playlistPageNum=1>

CHEK News also provided a summary of the report:

<https://www.cheknews.ca/restoring-commuter-rail-on-vancouver-island-would-cost-730-millionsays-new-report-665375/>

Letter: VIA Rail needs federal government support for national strategy

<https://windsorstar.com/opinion/letters/reader-letter-via-rail-needs-federal-government-support-for-national-strategy/>

Lethbridge Transit switches to on-demand model to provide essential service

<https://lethbridgenewsnow.com/2020/04/03/lethbridge-transit-will-require-reservations-only-for-essential-travel/>

Ottawa: RTG meets March 31 deadline to deliver plan to fix Confederation Line

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/rtg-meets-march-31-deadline-to-deliver-plan-to-fix-confederation-line-1.4878316>

Hamilton Task Force report recommends \$1bn in transportation money should still be spent on LRT or BRT

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/transportation-hamilton-task-force-lrt-1.5528406>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/hamilton-transportation-task-force-report>

Belleville receives funding for new buses and shelters

<https://www.quintenews.com/2020/04/15/belleville-transit-gets-5-million-to-buy-buses-and-upgrade-shelters/>

CN suspends service on former BC Rail line between Williams Lake and Squamish

<https://www.mycariboonow.com/60937/cn-service-between-williams-lake-and-squamish-suspended/>

Vancouver: Health-care workers concerned over potential transit cuts

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/a-completely-unreasonable-burden-health-care-workers-concerned-over-potential-transit-cuts-1.5533947>

Vancouver: Public transit funding must be the foundation of our economic recovery

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/translink-coronavirus-funding-opinion>

Montreal Metro facing shortfall due to Covid-19

<https://journalmetro.com/actualites/montreal/2440189/transport-collectif-montreal-devra-se-prononcer-sur-un-fonds-durgence/>

Ontario Northland reduces bus services due to Covid-19

<https://www.elliottlaketoday.com/local-news/ontario-northland-announces-reduction-of-bus-service-across-the-province-2273200>

Thunder Bay Bombardier plant to assist in manufacturing 18,000 ventilators

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/thunder-bay-bombardier-ventilators-1.5534314>

Operation Lifesaver partners with Waze for crossing safety

<https://www.railwayage.com/news/ol-partners-with-waze-for-safety-app/>

Analysis: Electrification and Lithium Ion Batteries

<https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/you-can-rely-upon-lithium-ion/>

Analysis: UBS predicts post-pandemic shift from air to high speed rail

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/policy/ubs-predicts-post-pandemic-shift-from-air-to-high-speed-rail/56195.article>

Italy: Milan announces ambitious scheme to reduce car use after lockdown

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/milan-seeks-to-prevent-post-crisis-return-of-traffic-pollution>

Mexico: Sino-Portuguese consortium to build first section of Tren Maya

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/news/sino-portuguese-consortium-to-build-first-section-of-tren-maya-network/56366.article>

USA: Amtrak receives \$1bn in federal emergency funding

<https://www.railway-technology.com/news/covid-19-impact-amtrak-funding/>

Sweden: Overnight train service to Brussels under consideration

<https://www.aviation24.be/airlines/swedish-transport-administration-proposes-malmo-cologne-brussels-night-trains/>

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!

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

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