

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 we move into June, public transit schedules across Canada are in flux, with some resuming normal services and others facing catastrophic cuts due to municipal budget shortfalls brought on by the Covid-19 crisis. *Toronto is even having to contemplate closing entire subway lines.*

Transport Action joined 75 transit advocacy groups across Canada in writing to the federal government on May 12 urging emergency funding to support municipalities and transit systems across the country, and in a [National Day of Action to Keep Transit Moving](#) on May 28th. Transit drivers have been on the front lines providing essential services over the last few months, and there's no way they should be facing layoffs now. Nor will cuts support our economy as businesses begin to reopen.

After several weeks of suggesting the provinces should take the lead, the \$2.2 billion advance on the federal gas tax fund, announced by Justin Trudeau on Monday June 1st, is a success for the *Keep Transit Moving* campaign. It will help municipalities with cash flow the short term and may stave off some cuts for the time being, but this is an advance on funding that would usually have flowed later this year, not new money to plug the deficits municipalities are facing, and far short of the \$10 billion the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has calculated is needed, so we must maintain the pressure on federal government and the provinces to act on this issue.

Standing up for inter-city rail and long-distance motor coach services

Transport Action Canada is keenly aware that Canadians who live in smaller communities depend on long-distance trains and motor coaches for essential mobility, yet often don't have as loud a political voice as our larger cities. With buses also transporting prescriptions, medical tests and drinking water tests to many remote communities, this is an issue the federal government is directly responsible for, and which mustn't be neglected. We're closely following the

issues arising from bus service suspensions (see below) but we are pleased to have received confirmation that the Prince Rupert train, suspended since February, will return on July 5th, restoring services to several isolated communities along its route.

On May 5th, we wrote to the federal Minister of Transport, the Hon. Marc Garneau MP, calling upon the government to release emergency funding to support both motor coach services and VIA Rail Canada's long-distance train services through the Covid-19 crisis, and to ensure they are able to support our economy and communities as we recover from it. Ensuring that everyone has access to sustainable and dependable public transportation is going to be the key to a green recovery that benefits all Canadians.

See our full article and letter: <https://www.transportaction.ca/topics/intercity-rail-and-bus/long-distance-trains-and-motor-coaches-are-essential-services/>

We've made it easy for you to make your voice heard and speak out on these issues. Use our click-to-call page to reach you Member of Parliament and provincial politicians:

[Phone Your MP](#)

Transport Action's voice for reliable public transport that keeps the cost of living affordable for all Canadians will be critical in the next few months. If you are able to do so, please set up a regular monthly contribution so we can stay focussed on campaigning. Giving **\$5** or more, tax deductible, is easier than ever with our updated online forms, and membership is now automatically renewed for all monthly donors.

[Chip in now →](#)

It's been a busy month for our advocacy work, and we have good news to share on a number of rail and transit projects, so I hope you enjoy reading our even longer than normal newsletter.

Sincerely,



Terry Johnson
President, Transport Action Canada

Transport Action in the News

[Globe and Mail: Coalition presses Ottawa to Provide Bailout for Canadian Public Transit](#)

Halifax Approves Major Transit Initiative



Proposed BRT and Ferry Routes - Halifax Regional Municipality

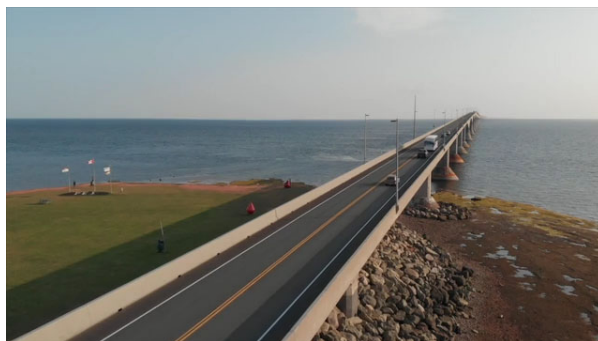
On May 26 when the Halifax Regional Municipality approved two projects that together represent the largest single investment the city has ever made in public transit. The proposed bus rapid transit plan calls for high frequency, limited stop service on four key routes from 6 am to 10 pm daily, on a 10-minute headway or better. The concept also includes a major expansion of ferry routes, using high speed catamaran-style vessels.

The bus electrification plan is based on battery powered buses that could cover over 80% of existing routes with current technology. Bringing these projects to fruition will only be possible by partnering with other levels of government for funding, but a staff report suggests that "given the role that either can play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector, they are well positioned to receive support, as they align with key provincial and federal priorities aimed at tackling climate change and supporting public transit."

Uncertain Future for VIA's *Ocean* Amid Maritime Travel Restrictions

VIA Rail announced on May 6 that its *Ocean* service will not resume before November 1 at the earliest - a far more distant horizon than that predicted by any other carrier in the face of Covid-19 uncertainty. When it finally does return, the train will apparently be very different than before. In a written statement released to the *Moncton Times & Transcript* on May 26, the Crown corporation said it was "pleased to announce an operational plan that will allow to continue operating the *Ocean* without access to the Halterm rail loop." Pressed for further details, VIA declined to answer any of the newspaper's questions. Neither has the company had any apparent engagement with provincial governments or the municipalities it serves. It is evident, however, that the product will be further and significantly downgraded from the already inadequate service offered at the time of its abrupt shutdown on March 13. **Transport Action Atlantic** will continue to seek clarification of the proposed changes.

Although Atlantic Canada continues to fare better than the rest of Canada, the pandemic continues to severely restrict movement to, from and within the region. The only interprovincial travel (other than private auto) available in the region is the tri-weekly service being maintained by Maritime Bus on all its major routes. While the company is clearly hurting, owner Mike Cassidy remains optimistic about its future, releasing the following video statement:



Coach Atlantic Maritime Bus Covid-19 Message

There's also limited air service by Air Canada and WestJet daily between Halifax and St. John's, with greatly reduced access from most major airports to Toronto and/or Montreal. A full regional update can be found on the TAA website at <https://www.transportactionatlantic.ca>

Re-engineering Canadian Passenger Transportation for the Future

The current global pandemic and concurrent and escalating threat of climate change requires new thinking on how to re-engineer Canadian passenger transportation for the future. **Transport Action Ontario** has written a letter to the federal government offering important ideas to consider, including

- Replacing short haul flights with passenger rail. For example, taking a page from the approach in France, mandate that any federal bailouts should require the airlines to work with passenger rail operators to replace most short haul flights.
- Making Pearson Airport an inter-city rail hub
- Subsidizing long-distance inter-city bus operation
- Reassessing recent and future rail abandonments

<https://ontario.transportaction.ca/key-actions-to-re-engineer-canadian-passenger-transportation-for-the-future/>

Ontario Northland extends bus services to Thunder Bay and Winnipeg



In early May, Kasper Transportation suspended all its inter-city bus service, citing severe financial constraints. This entrepreneurial firm stepped into the void when Greyhound vacated Northern Ontario, and was providing service on six routes centred on Thunder Bay. This prompted **Transport Action Ontario** to write to the Ontario Minister of Transportation on May 4th requesting emergency funding for Kasper's essential services to remote communities.

<https://ontario.transportaction.ca/emergency-funding-for-kasper-transportation/>

On May 14, the Ontario government announced that Ontario Northland would begin service between White River, Thunder Bay and Winnipeg, with two return trips per week. The other routes remain unserved. This was a surprise, as we understand that discussions had been underway between Ontario Northland and Kasper for some form of partnership. This situation illustrates the uneasy relationship in Ontario between government-owned and privately-owned bus operators. Similar problems have arisen in southern Ontario between Metrolinx and private operators. Transport Action is undertaking analysis of this problem area.

Rail Innovation in Canada Report Released

The Canadian Urban Transit Research and Innovation Consortium has released a report, produced for Transport Canada through extensive consultations with industry, academic and community partners including **Transport Action Canada**, identifying the top ten priority research areas for the future of passenger and freight rail in Canada. Transport Action's contribution to the consultations recommended using computer modelling to optimize the use of existing infrastructure and to prioritize targeted investments to eliminate bottlenecks. The full report is available for download:

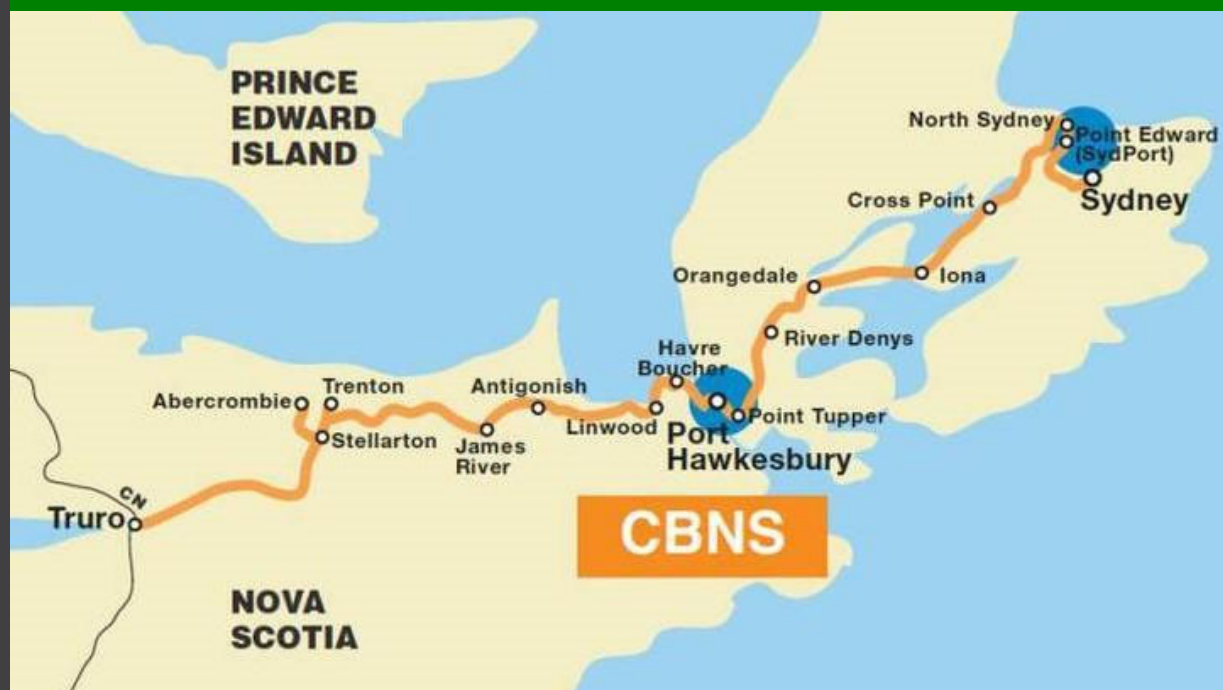
<https://cutric-crituc.org/research-resources/rail-innovation-in-canada/>

TTC Initiates Fare Policy & Collection Study

The Toronto Transit Commission is commencing an 18 month study on transit fare policy and collection. The policy study will evaluate different structures including zero fares, full cost recovery, various concessions, and integration with 905 agencies. The collection study will review best practices elsewhere and identify fare collection technologies, such as open payment cards and limited use cards, that can deliver the policy goals.

Transport Action Ontario welcomes this study, particularly the willingness to examine fare integration with other GTHA agencies.

Encouraging News for Cape Breton Rail Line



Another positive story came out of Nova Scotia on May 14, when the provincial government revealed that a new one-year deal has been reached with Genesee and Wyoming Corporation - now owned by Toronto-based Brookfield Asset Management - to maintain the defunct rail line between Sydney and the Strait of Canso in its current state of suspended animation. It's been nearly five years since the last freight moved over the line, but the Province had been paying up to \$60,000 per month to G&W to postpone dismantling of the infrastructure. There had been concerns that G&W was being paid excessively under the old arrangement, and the new contract addresses this by setting the payment at a

fixed \$30,000 each month. In making the announcement, Business Minister Geoff MacLellan stated that the rail line was vital to a proposed international container terminal in Cape Breton, and the government now believes that the proponents have convinced potential investors of the project's viability.

Sydney Harbour Investment Partners, known as SHIP, was formed specifically to assemble the business consortium required to develop the deep-water [Novaporte](#) mega-terminal and associated logistics park.

Albert Barbusci, the lead promoter for the project, recently told **Transport Action Atlantic** that the Canada Infrastructure Bank was seriously interested in funding the modest \$130 million investment required to restore the entire G&W line from Truro to Sydney to class 3 standard. On the Novaporte project overall, "our momentum is really good," he said, adding that five federal ministries have an interest in it - including Infrastructure, Transport, Energy, Environment, and Indigenous Affairs. The Membertou First Nation has a partnership stake in the venture, and there's also a potential green power component, using a new technology to convert waste plastics to energy. Barbusci emphasizes that the Cape Breton project should not be seen in any way as a threat to Halifax - the competition is the already-congested ports on the US Eastern Seaboard, which have little room for expansion.

CN Launches Short-Haul Intermodal Service

In another rail freight development, CN announced on May 22 a new intermodal rail service between the Port of Halifax and Moncton's Gordon Yard. The media release said the railway, in collaboration with the Halifax Port Authority, stakeholders, ocean carriers and customers, would offer "integrated solutions" through the Moncton facility.

The initiative is viewed as a positive development in getting more freight traffic off rubber and onto rail, but the full implications are not immediately clear. At minimum, however, it should mean a significant reduction in heavy truck traffic on the congested streets of downtown Halifax, and should also reduce wear-and-tear on highway infrastructure between Halifax and Moncton while lowering the carbon footprint of freight transportation.

Yonge North Subway Extension Reaches Milestone

The Yonge North Subway Extension (YNSE), from Finch Station in Toronto to Richmond Hill Centre in York Region, a project long supported by **Transport Action Ontario**, recently reached a milestone with the signing of the "Ontario-York Region Transit Partnership Preliminary Agreement." An updated Initial Business Case is slated to be presented to the Metrolinx Board soon, but many challenges remain, including addressing the capital cost escalation which has plagued Toronto-area transit projects in recent years.

Full report on the TAO website: <https://ontario.transportaction.ca/yonge-north-subway-extension-reaches-milestone-but-challenges-remain>

Transportation Newsround

Greyhound Canada suspends all bus routes in Canada due to COVID-19
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/greyhound-canada-coronavirus-1.5559180>

With dip in ridership, GO Transit speeding up 'critical' projects on Barrie line
<https://www.barrietoday.com/coronavirus-covid-19-local-news/with-dip-in-ridership-go-transit-speeding-up-critical-projects-on-barrie-line-2333360>

BC: Emergency provincial funding averts layoffs and service cuts at TransLink
<https://www.mapleridgenews.com/news/translink-scraps-layoffs-impacting-1500-employees-amid-emergency-provincial-funding/>

Thunder Bay Atikokan MPP Judith Monteith-Farrell speaks out on Transportation Issues
<http://www.netnewsledger.com/2020/05/09/thunder-bay-atikokan-mpp-judith-monteith-farrell-on-transportation-issues/>

Montreal: Here's how to get around the Mount Royal tunnel closure
<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/here-s-how-to-get-around-the-mount-royal-tunnel-closure-1.4933738>

Nova Scotia government continues subsidy for idled Cape Breton rail line
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/n-s-government-continues-subsidy-for-idled-cape-breton-rail-line-1.5569937>

Toronto: John Tory says city forced to contemplate 'devastating' service cuts without federal, provincial funding
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-covid-19-may-22-1.5580045>

Fiona Murray Becomes First Female RAC Board Chair
<https://www.railwayage.com/freight/short-lines-regionals/murray-becomes-first-female-rac-board-chair/>

Rocky Mountaineer extends rail-service suspension
https://www.progressiverailroading.com/passenger_rail/news/Rocky-Mountaineer-extends-rail-service-suspension--60475

Siemens Mobility Appoints Yves Desjardins-Siciliano as Canadian CEO
<https://business.financialpost.com/pmn/press-releases-pmn/business-wire-news-releases-pmn/siemens-mobility-appoints-yves-desjardins-siciliano-as-canadian-ceo>

Ottawa: Rejection of Prince of Wales Bridge illustrates difficulty of planning Ottawa-Gatineau rail link
<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/analysis-rejection-of-prince-of-wales-bridge-illustrates-difficulty-of-planning-ottawa-gatineau-rail-link/>

Via Rail increasing service on Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal corridor in June

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/via-rail-increasing-service-on-toronto-ottawa-montreal-corridor-in-june-1.4948525>

Bombardier Thunder Bay lands contract for 28 BiLevel cars for US west coast transit agencies

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/bombardier-thunder-bay-new-contract-1.5586690>

Canada extends cruise ship ban

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/feds-extend-cruise-ship-ban-through-the-summer-1.4960222>

France: Airline bailout linked to cooperation with passenger rail

<https://www.railjournal.com/passenger/high-speed/air-france-ordered-to-curb-competitor-with-rail-in-france/>

UK: Transport network to get £283m for Covid-19 protection measures

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/23/government-to-spend-283m-to-keep-bus-and-train-passengers-safe>

USA: Lack of rail limits U.S. ability to lower airline emissions

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1063101853>

USA: Massachusetts Rep. Seth Moulton proposes \$240 billion HSR investment

<https://www.globalrailwayreview.com/news/100907/plans-investment-us-high-speed-rail/>

USA: Bill would provide additional \$250 million for grade crossing safety

https://www.progressiverailroading.com/federal_legislation_regulation/news/Bill-would-increase-federal-funding-for-grade-crossing-safety-projects--60536

USA: The Minnesota Intercity Passenger Rail Plan - Getting Back On Track?

<https://streets.mn/2020/05/06/the-minnesota-intercity-passenger-rail-plan-getting-back-on-track/>

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...

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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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