

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.



## A rail renaissance for Alberta?

Dear ,

After more than thirty years, this month brings us the welcome news that the return of passenger rail to Calgary is a step closer. The Government of Alberta has recommended a proposal for a Calgary-Banff rail service for consideration by the Canada Infrastructure Bank. This 130 km route would connect a station near Calgary International Airport with downtown Calgary, as well as Cochrane, Morley, Canmore and Banff, using new track within Canadian Pacific's right of way, at an estimated cost of \$680 million.



The Canadian at Banff in 1982. Photo by Manfred Kopka.

This is music to the ears of **Transport Action Canada**. We have not forgotten the cuts of 1981 and 1990 and will not forgive the economic and social damage wrought, particularly upon western Canada and the Maritimes where the knife was plunged deepest. Reversing these cuts is core to our mission to restore accessible and reliable public transport to communities across Canada.

The City of Calgary estimates that the project could create \$1.4 billion a year in new economic activity from tourism, which would be an outstanding return on investment.

## Calgary Green Line Stage 1 Approved

Meanwhile, on June 16 Calgary City Council approved stage 1 of the Green Line LRT, from Shepard in the Southeast of the city, through downtown, to 16 Avenue N. The first stage of construction is expected to be constructed from 2021-2027 and estimated to cost \$4.9 billion.

This is a significant victory for local transit advocates, passing 14-1 despite a last-minute lobbying effort against the project by a few well-funded anti-transit voices that included an "opinion poll" conducted to promote a dubious "alternative" option to adding a vital new transit link across the Bow River.

With increasingly well-developed LRT and bus feeder networks at each end, and the complementary Calgary-Banff train project, is it too much to hope that plans for a high-performance rail link between Calgary and Edmonton might also be dusted off before long?

## Skeena Service Returns

Passenger trains are also returning to Jasper, AB as of July 5, with the restoration of VIA Rail's service to Prince George and Prince Rupert, running once a week with departures from Jasper on Sundays and from Prince Rupert on Wednesdays.



*Photo by Alan Vernon*

The route had been out of action since the spring because of the blockade associated with the Coastal GasLink pipeline protest, followed by a suspension imposed on the "essential" service by CN in order to facilitate work to upgrade the line to the container and freight terminals at Prince Rupert.

[Read the full story on our website...](#)

If you live in Alberta or the Prairies and would like to get more involved in advocating for these and other public transport projects for the region, we would like to bring together a local working group of Transport Action members. Please get in touch if you're interested.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry".

Terry Johnson  
President, Transport Action Canada

# Welcome to All Aboard St. Marys



All Board St. Marys, a non-government organization based in St. Marys, Ontario, has informed their members that they intend to merge with **Transport Action Ontario**. This group has been a strong and vocal advocate for improvement of passenger rail service on the North Main Line between Kitchener and London.

All Aboard St Marys has been very successful in raising awareness of passenger rail with MPs, MPPs and the general public. Use of the train in St. Marys is up 75% over the past decade, and both a wheelchair lift and electric vehicle charger have been installed at the community-managed train station.

**We welcome members of All Aboard St. Marys to the Transport Action family.**

## A note about Covid-19 and public transport

With Covid-19 case numbers across Canada thankfully dropping, public transport use is now trending upward as society reopens. Many transit systems are returning to normal schedules and fares, yet there are changes in travel patterns that are likely to be long lasting.

However, this many not all be bad news - a shift to working from home or to living and working in smaller centres means a shift away from morning-in evening-out commute peaks that require a lot of vehicle capacity for only a few hours per day, to a more even day-round travel pattern. Combined with initiatives like on-demand bus routing and mobile fare payment that some transit systems have experimented with over the last few months, this could actually improve equipment utilization and allow vehicles and drivers to be redeployed to provide a more socially inclusive service for the same amount of public investment.

You can use your well-informed voice, as a Transport Action member, to speak up for "building back better" in conversations with your municipal councillors and politicians. Please [reach out to us](#) for advice or resources.

Most transit systems, all motor coaches, and VIA Rail are currently requiring face coverings. Although the infection risk from taking transit is low, wearing a face mask on public transport is an important act of courtesy toward our more vulnerable neighbours, including those with disabilities, who rely on transit to get around and need to feel confident they are safe using the bus or train.



Photo: TransLink

## Atlantic Canada creates travel bubble

The four Atlantic region premiers have announced the formation of a regional travel bubble, effective on Friday, July 3. This means that residents of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island will be free to travel throughout the four provinces for business or pleasure without restrictions or requirements to self-isolate. Hospitality industry interests are optimistic that this may help salvage something from the 2020 tourism season, which had been looking extremely bleak.

Details: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2020/exec/0624n03/>

There will continue to be checkpoints at provincial boundaries, but some of the premiers are already musing about the possibility of opening the region to visits by other Canadian residents later in the summer, depending on how circumstances unfold.

Maritime Bus has already added Sundays to its temporary tri-weekly schedule on all major routes, and for the first weekend of the bubble will operate on Saturday as well, in anticipation of a surge in traffic as the border restrictions are relaxed. The carrier will review demand on an ongoing basis, aiming to have its full schedule restored by August 1. The company is leading the industry with installation of plexiglass barriers between rows of seats, and adjacent seats can currently only be occupied by passengers travelling together.

Meanwhile, DRL Coachlines has resumed its service between points on the Trans Canada Highway in Newfoundland after an almost three-month hiatus. This means it is now possible to travel between the island and mainland points without having to fly, although it isn't clear what effect Marine Atlantic's greatly reduced passenger capacity might have. The ferry company is telling **Transport Action Atlantic** that the present restriction of 100 per sailing will be reviewed based on demand, consistent with physical distancing considerations and assuring the safety of passengers and crew.

VIA Rail, for its part, has not expressed any intention of resuming any service to Atlantic Canada before November, and sleeper class bookings in November and

December are currently blocked pending details of adjustments to services on board. TAA views this as indicative of the low priority given the region by current VIA management.

## New VP of Transportation for Ontario Northland

Ontario Northland announced the appointment of Drew Duquette as VP of Transportation on June 25, replacing Grant Bailey who is retiring in July.

Drew Duquette has 35 years of experience in the railway industry, most recently as Superintendent of Southwestern Ontario at Canadian Pacific. Duquette will be returning to his northern roots, staying in a statement released to the media "I was born and raised in the North, so it feels good to return and contribute to a region that has always been important to me."

His mandate will encompass rail freight and passenger services, plus infrastructure and Ontario Northland's railcar refurbishment business.

## Two European shipyards qualify to replace Marine Atlantic ferry



*MV Leif Ericson - Photo: R F Bailey*

Marine Atlantic announced on June 9 that two companies, Stena North Sea Ltd. and Rederi AB Gotland, have been shortlisted to move to the RFP stage for the procurement of a new vessel for the Crown corporation's fleet. Funding for the procurement had been announced in the last federal budget, and a request for qualifications was issued in July 2019. More details about the vessel particulars such as size, design features and technical specifications will be presented once a contract has been entered into with the successful proponent. The new vessel is expected to enter service by 2024 to replace *MV Leif Ericson*, which will then be more than 33 years old.

The *Leif Ericson* was built in Norway and began its career as *Stena Challenger*, a cross channel ferry between England and France, before being purchased by Canada in 2001 as English Channel truck traffic moved to the then-new Channel Tunnel rail link.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/marine-atlantic-shipyards-new-ferry-1.5607421>

## CUTRIC conference promotes hydrogen, emphasizes diversity

The Canadian Urban Transit Research and Innovation Consortium held its second annual Low Carbon Mobility Summit on June 17-19. Originally to be held in Winnipeg, the event was hosted entirely online due to Covid-19, with hundreds of participants over the three days.

In her keynote address, CUTRIC CEO Dr. Josipa Petrunic emphasized the role the public transit has to play at the intersection of the some high-profile challenges of our time, including equality of participation in society and personal safety regardless of gender or skin colour, supporting front-line workers and their families through the Covid-19 crisis, and addressing the concerns of young people about controlling climate change to ensure a healthy future.

Federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities Catherine McKenna was also keynote speaker, reiterating a campaign commitment to 5,000 electric buses, and speaking of the need for a "national infrastructure assessment" for public transport.

A key concern highlighted at the conference was the low uptake of hydrogen technology in Canadian bus and rail networks, even though Canada is a world leader in hydrogen technology with a complete supply chain of companies including Hydrogenics, Ballard Power Systems, New Flyer and Nova Bus. Should the government wish to capitalize on Canadian technology leadership, there are several opportunities to deploy hydrogen-powered train in Canada. Reopening the Vancouver Island line is perhaps the most promising, the South Fraser Community Rail proposal to link Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford and Chilliwack would be a second opportunity in BC. The proposed Calgary-Banff service could also benefit from this technology, and Ottawa's Trillium Line extension currently plans to use the diesel version of Stadler's Flirt design, and a hydrogen variant is already on order for a similar corridor in San Bernardino County, California. A conference focussed on hydrogen and rail is planned for the fall.

Pacific Northwest Transportation Services in Victoria, BC have the most significant deployment of hydrogen in the Canadian bus industry to date, with motor coaches powered by hydrogen that is generated using biomass waste offloaded from cruise ships, creating a win-win for sustainable tourism on Vancouver Island.

Using hydrogen fuelling is also seen as a method of overcoming the challenge of installing enough electrical infrastructure to charge an entire garage full of battery-electric buses overnight, although advanced sequential charging

technology from ABB and Siemens was also discussed at the conference, as were on-route flash-charging technologies to keep vehicles charged throughout the day.

The industry is working toward interoperability of on-route charging infrastructure so municipalities and transit systems can avoid vendor lock-in, with Brampton Transit deploying 8 electric buses and four different overhead charging systems in phase one of a Pan-Canadian Electric Bus Demonstration and Integration Trial, and reporting annual fuel and maintenance savings of \$50,000 for each electric bus deployed in their transit fleet.

Videos of some of the keynote speeches are now available online:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcuYKb-nKMaCl2Q4rHTC7aw>

## Transportation Newsround

VIA Rail working to improve accessibility

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/via-rail-committed-to-follow-the-way-towards-a-more-accessible-and-inclusive-future-862344668.html>

Gaspé Railway "acceleration" welcome, but light on details

<https://www.gaspetrain.org/gt-specs/2020/Railway-acceleration-likely-to-yield-modest-results.pdf>

Halifax Transit ramping up bus and ferry service

<https://www.halifaxtoday.ca/coronavirus-covid-19-local-news/halifax-transits-next-phase-of-ramping-up-bus-service-starts-monday-2444040>

Canada Infrastructure Bank to provide HFR recommendation to government by end of year.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-infrastructure-bank-says-its-making-progress-on-new-rail-line/>

Montreal Metro's Blue line faces delays, Galeries d'Anjou lawsuit

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/metro-stm-blue-line-montreal-1.5499762>

Calgary Councillors call for On-Demand Transit expansion

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/councillors-call-to-expand-calgary-transit-on-demand-service-following-successful-pilot>

Ottawa LRT: New CEOs for RTG and RTM announced

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/new-transit-execs-face-monumental-task-for-lrt-upgrade>

TTC and Metrolinx ramp up Covid-19 precautions

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2020/06/30/ttc-metrolinx-take-more-steps-to-protect-riders-as-crowding-increases/>

Australia: Victoria government saves Overland train service

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-30/overland-train-saved-for-three-years-by-victorian-government/12406186>

UK: Restoring Your Railway Fund launched to support community rail initiatives

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/uk/restoring-your-railway-fund-could-provide-a-toolkit-for-town-transformation/56799.article>

UK: LNER franchise to stay in public sector

<https://www.railnews.co.uk/news/2020/06/29-lner-to-carry-on-in.html>

USA: Keolis contact in Boston extended

<https://www.railjournal.com/passenger/commuter-rail/keolis-secures-four-year-extension-to-boston-commuter-contract/>

USA: It's Time for America to Get Serious About Fixing The Trains

[https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/coronavirus-trains-travel-climate-change\\_n\\_5ef08f5fc5b627efb3967e23](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/entry/coronavirus-trains-travel-climate-change_n_5ef08f5fc5b627efb3967e23)

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!

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**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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