



Canada's long distance trains are under threat

Hello ,

Following a successful online Annual General Meeting for Transport Action Canada, both our Atlantic and Ontario regions will also be holding their annual meetings online this month. See below for webinar registration details.

As I write this, we're finding out that VIA Rail's plans to restart long distance services have been pushed back another month, to the beginning of December. While Covid-19 case numbers are on the rise, communities from Amherst to Ashcroft have now been without rail service for six months and private cabins on trains appear to be one of the safest ways to travel should we need to do so. Please write to your Member of Parliament asking the federal government to support VIA Rail in safely restarting these services for Canadians.

[Write to your MP: Restart Canada's Trains.](#)

There's also increasing concern for the future of our long distance trains. The contract for Bombardier to fit wheelchair lifts to 17 stainless steel coaches has been cancelled, by "mutual consent" nearly two years after it was first announced. There's no plan yet to replace the accessible sleeping cars used on the *Ocean* either, even though it is widely known that the *Renaissance* cars are due for retirement. For the \$3.5m per car earmarked for the retrofit contract, we should have been getting new equipment anyway, but without commitment from the government to order new accessible equipment, it will be increasingly difficult for VIA Rail to provide a service that all Canadians can use.

There is a bit of good news for communities across the Prairies, because Rider Express has now applied for a license to extend bus service eastwards from Regina to Winnipeg, and onward to Toronto, closing a the huge gap in the bus network that Greyhound left when they pulled out in 2018.

We're also pleased to welcome John Richmond to the Transport Action Canada board. John works as a social worker in both in both Ontario and BC, is also a member of the board of TTC Riders, and has previously served on a number of other boards including the Alterna Savings

credit union.

Sincerely,



Terry Johnson, President

More good news: Personal donations and memberships are up by more the 25% for 2020 so far, and that's enabled us to significantly expand our campaigns and advocacy. **Thank you!** We'll need to do even more to keep fighting for Canada's long-distance trains, and for modern accessible equipment so every Canadian can use them. Giving a small amount each month helps us focus on advocacy and means your membership will always renew automatically, so please consider setting up a monthly donation using our easy online form:

Support Our
Work

Atlantic AGM - October 17th

Transport Action Atlantic's 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held online on Saturday October 17th. Email invitations will be sent to all Atlantic members. [Join or renew now.](#)

<http://transportactionatlantic.ca/annual-general-meeting-notice/>

Ontario AGM - October 24th

Transport Action Ontario's 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held online on Saturday October 24th, 2020, starting at 1 pm Eastern.

Public Presentation by Stephen Wickens

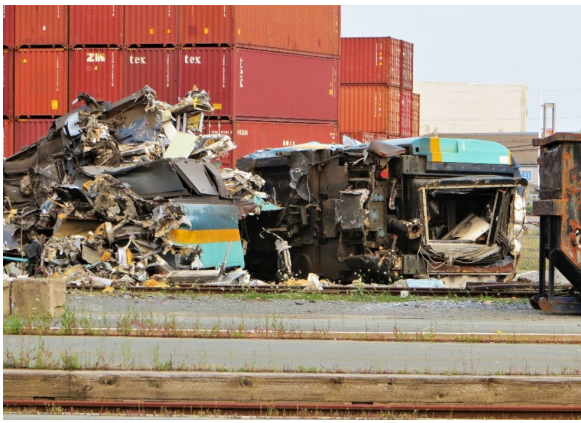
We are pleased to announce that our guest lecturer will be Stephen Wickens, transit researcher and journalist with a four-decade career at four Toronto-based daily newspapers. Steve will summarize his recent report for the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) entitled "*Station to Station: Why Subway-building Costs have Soared in the Toronto Region*". This thoughtful report has been well received and hopefully will inform government decisions about at-grade versus below-grade rapid transit projects.



The AGM will review 2019-2020 performance by the organization and elect the executive and board of directors for the upcoming year. Ontario members in good standing will receive an electronic invite and can vote at the virtual meeting, or give a proxy to another member. Send proxy information to ontario@transportaction.ca.

Register Now

Renaissance coaches scrapped in Halifax



“I can’t help but feel like this is an appropriate image for the sorry state of passenger rail in this region,” said **Transport Action Atlantic** vice-president Tim Hayman about this photo he took on September 17, showing the remains of two VIA Renaissance coaches that were scrapped on site near the Halifax station.

The troublesome British-built “carriages” received structural damage in a slow-speed switching derailment in November 2018.

“I understand VIA salvaged anything they thought was useful, but there's still lots left in the cars – including all the seats, and even some packages of paper towel and unopened rolls of toilet paper!” Tim reported.

The further delay to the resumption of VIA Rail services in the Maritimes and across Western Canada, announced on September 25th, were attributed to Covid-19 by the in a media release from the Crown corporation. While VIA didn’t exactly say so, it is clear that the “Atlantic Bubble” is problematic for the company. The *Ocean* originates in Montreal and enters the Atlantic region near the small northern New Brunswick city of Campbellton. Because there is a mandatory two-week self-isolation requirement for everyone entering any of the four easternmost provinces from elsewhere in Canada, the boundary crossing could be quite complicated, although airlines are still flying from the rest of Canada to the Maritimes.

Preserving Canada’s Rail Infrastructure and Providing Short Line Railway Assistance

Transport Action Ontario has recently sent two letters to the federal government on Canada’s rail infrastructure. The first letter discusses the need for an urgent national strategy to preserve rail infrastructure, including financial assistance and a national rail-banking scheme.



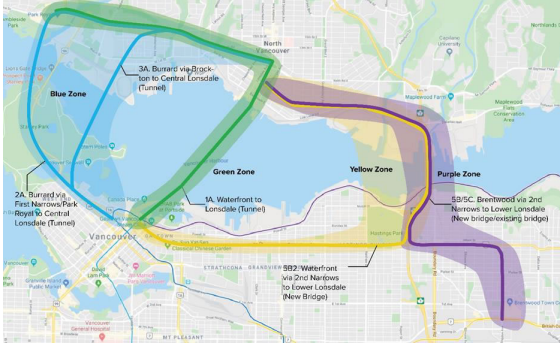
The second letter discusses badly-needed financial assistance for short-line railways. [Both letters can be viewed here.](#)

With the assistance of Transport Action members across Canada, the letters were accompanied by a comprehensive list of active and dormant rail corridors that are under threat and which should be protected for future use.

This work is particularly relevant because the Huron Central Railway is once again facing closure by the end of the year, threatening the loss of more than 3,000 jobs at industries along the route. Discussions around further government support not showing much progress, showing the need for a national policy on short-line railways, similar to that in the United States. Sudbury-based Diesel Electric Services have expressed interest in taking over from Genesee & Wyoming, so there is still hope that the corridor and the jobs could be saved.

SkyTrain extension to North Vancouver moves closer

September 9 saw the release of the long awaited Stage 2 of the *Burrard Inlet Rapid*



Transit Study. The project, started in 2018 and funded by the BC Ministry of Transportation, will eventually extend SkyTrain services to the north shore.

[Full story on the TABC website.](#)

Bus ridership steady in the Maritimes, strike averted in St. Johns

Maritime Bus has still not reached the point where it is ready to resume its full operating schedule. Owner Mike Cassidy says the passenger volume on the four days each week that all the main routes are in service is still not strong enough to support daily operation. Average ridership in September was 250 per day system-wide, down slightly from the traditionally busy month of August. While he says he's pleased and encouraged by support from the travelling public so far, he doesn't want to ramp up service and then be forced to pull back in what he still describes as "an extremely difficult time."

He was particularly upbeat, however, about the Charlottetown area transit service T3, which he operates under contract to the City. T3 marked its 15th anniversary on September 30, and now boasts a 50% load factor – well above the national average for transit systems.

And, there was also good news from St. John's on September 30, as Metrobus Transit and its unionized employees reached a tentative agreement, avoiding a looming strike deadline that would have brought the service to a standstill on October 5. It almost goes without saying that a transit strike is the last thing any city needs at this challenging time.

Tunnels for Eglinton Crosstown West LRT Extension raise cost concerns

Transport Action Ontario has written both senior levels of government expressing our concerns with Ontario's plans to construct costly below-grade rapid transit in the spacious Eglinton West corridor, urging the Province to choose a less expensive at-grade concept that is also projected to carry more passengers. [Our letter can be viewed here.](#)

Hamilton LRT – Positive Signals?

Events continue to unfold in a positive way for this important urban transit project, estimated to have a capital cost of about \$3 billion. The Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA) has offered to contribute 33% of the capital cost in a Public-Private Partnership project, in return for control and ownership of land adjacent to the LRT line.



The Federal government continues to drop encouraging hints. And the Province of Ontario appears open to using its \$1 billion commitment to an LRT project. The next milestone, anticipated soon, will likely be the Province's official reaction to the Task Force report of last spring, which nominated LRT as the best alternative for Hamilton transportation investment.

Transportation Newsround

PAL Airlines launches St. Johns to Moncton route

<https://www.capebretonpost.com/business/regional-business/pal-airlines-launches-new-st-johns-to-moncton-direct-route-499945/>

Ottawa LRT stage 3 to Barrhaven could run on elevated guideway

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/tricky-section-of-barrhaven-lrt-should-run-on-elevated-guideway-study-says>

TransLink to study potential renovations for West Coast Express

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/west-coast-express-upgrade-feasibility-study>

TransLink unveils possible Surrey SkyTrain station designs, launches new consultations

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7346238/translink-surrey-skytrain-designs-input/>

Tawatina Bridge Completion move Edmonton Valley Line LRT forward

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/tawatin%C3%A2-bridge-completion-marks-a-milestone-in-edmonton-lrt-expansion-1.5722020>

Burying the Eglinton West LRT will cost an extra \$1.8 billion and may serve fewer local riders. So why do it?

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2020/09/20/burying-the-eglinton-west-lrt-will-cost-an-extra-18-billion-and-may-serve-fewer-local-riders-so-why-do-it.html>

What's going on with Bowmanville GO?

<https://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/10190199-what-s-going-on-with-the-go-train-expansion-to-oshawa-and-clarington-/>

Orillia Transit getting major \$6.1-M booster shot from feds

<https://www.orilliamatters.com/local-news/orillia-transit-getting-major-61-m-booster-shot-from-feds-2729612>

London – St. Marys - Stratford – Kitchener and Listowel – Kitchener bus service contract finalized

<https://www.mystratfordnow.com/75804/stratford-approves-new-community-transportation-system/>

Ottawa: Misaligned screw caused cracked LRT wheels, city says

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/lrt-september-update-cracked-wheels-finances-rtg-1.5726149>

Rocky Mountaineer customers infuriated by lack of refunds for cancelled season

<https://www.kamloopsthisweek.com/lack-of-refunds-from-rocky-mountaineer-frustrating-many-would-be-travellers-1.24203975>

Sudbury competitor looks to take over Huron Central as current operator threatens pullout

<https://www.sootoday.com/local-business/sudbury-competitor-looks-to-take-over-sault-to-sudbury-rail-line-as-current-operator-threatens-pullout-2754414>

USA: FRA releases final safety regs, Record of Decision for Texas bullet train

https://www.progressiverailroading.com/high_speed_rail/news/FRA-releases-final-safety-regs-ROD-for-Texas-bullet-train--61628

USA: NC gets federal grant for buy corridor for Raleigh-Richmond high-performance rail

<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article245841010.html>

USA: Montana Passenger Rail Summit pushes to bring passenger rail back to southern Montana

https://www.khq.com/regional/advocates-push-to-bring-passenger-rail-back-to-southern-montana/article_33fa4e46-d0b4-58c5-a9a6-e2fa6adc8d3c.html

USA: Montana congressional delegation fights Amtrak frequency cut

<https://www.greatfallsribune.com/story/news/2020/09/25/amtrak-empire-builder-cuts-montana-routes-coronavirus/3499239001/>

New Zealand: KiwiRail launches new premium class.

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/travel/2020/09/kiwirail-launches-new-premium-class-on-tranzalpine-and-coastal-pacific-services.html>

UK: Hydrogen-powered train makes UK maiden journey

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/business-54350046>

Transport Action Canada is funded by grassroots members and donors like you. Your support enables us to continue our mission to ensure access to bus and rail services for to all Canadians.

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

Join or Renew
Now

If you would prefer to join or make a donation by mail, please [download our printable membership form](#) and post it to us at the address below with a cheque.

Thank you again for your continued support!

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