



TRANSPORT ACTION
CANADA

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Canadian returns between Winnipeg and Vancouver

Hello ,

The video of our 2020 AGM webcast is now online, so if you missed joining us live, you can now watch the presentations at your leisure. See the link below.

Our [campaign](#) for the restoration of a basic level of train service from coast to coast has been partially answered with the announcement the the Canadian will be reinstated west on Winnipeg, running once a week, starting on December 11th. The revised service level on the Canadian will include dining car meals but not access to the dome cars, with sleeper class ticket prices reduced to reflect this. Sadly, there is no such good news yet for the Maritimes, nor for northern Ontario where alternative transportation is particularly scarce, and one of the three daily round trips between Quebec City and Ottawa has also been suspended again as Covid-19 flare-ups impact those cities.

There is a promising development in the motor coach industry: Rider Express, who have been gradually reopening former STC and Greyhound routes in western Canada, have announced that they are now seeking to expand to Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa and even Montreal. As well as filling a crucial passenger service gap between Winnipeg and Regina, this should result in the reconnection of the package shipping network across the country, a vital source of revenue for bus operators seeking to maintain or restore routes to smaller communities. Rider Express have been discussing interline agreements with other operators, and have acquired four additional vehicles from Prevost for the expansion.



We also expect FlixBus to enter the Canadian market once cross-border travel to the US resumes, and the past few months have seen a rapid succession of demand-responsive transit announcements across the country, using software from Canadian companies like Spare, Pantonium, Blaise, and RideCo that are helping to close last-mile gaps and ensure that Canadians of all ages and abilities have access to reliable transportation wherever they happen to live. You can watch presentations by FlixBus and Spare in the recording of our AGM webcast below.



However, we live in a very big country and there's still *lots* of ground to cover and much work to be done to rebuild a world-class multi-modal public transport network. As I write this newsletter, BC's West Coast Express is marking 25 years of service, an example of the kind of progress we can achieve by making good use of existing rail corridors. Thank you for your continued participation in our advocacy efforts.

Sincerely,

Terry Johnson, President

Support Our Work

Ontario launches survey on "Improving transportation in Northeast Ontario"

The Ontario government has launched an online survey as part of its commitment to

improve passenger rail and bus services between Toronto, North Bay, Timmins and Cochrane. Presumably this is another step toward meeting its public commitment to restore the **Northlander** train and feeder bus service in the region. *If you live in the region or would use the new train to visit, please respond to the survey.*

[Click to respond to Public Consultation](#)



Ontario moves to deregulate intercity bus services

The Ontario government has introduced Bill 213, an omnibus bill that includes a proposal to dissolve the Ontario Highway Transport Board. This board was set up decades ago to regulate intercity motorcoach service. It provided exclusive franchises on profitable routes with the expectation that those profits would subsidize less profitable services to rural and remote areas. The system has not worked well in recent years, in that companies were allowed to drop low-performing routes while maintaining their monopolies on lucrative routes.

Transport Action Ontario has long advocated for modernizing the regulatory framework. However, we recognize that the most widely raised concern about motorcoach services is ensuring province-wide service with safe places to wait for the bus, not facilitating cutthroat competition on the busiest routes. A further concern is the damaging impact of an out-and-out bus war between private operators on a corridor parallel to VIA Rail or GO Transit. For rural and remote routes, it is likely to continue to be necessary for publicly-owned carriers such as Ontario Northland to operate the routes, or for the province to ensure service provision using community transportation grants.

Winnipeg envisions Union Station transit hub



Winnipeg's Union Station could become a multimodal hub, converting tracks 1 and 2 of the station to busways connected to the new elevated transit corridors, according to Winnipeg's Transit Master Plan, which has now entered the third and final phase of public engagement.

[Full story.](#)

Maritime Bus adds services for Christmas VIA Rail's *Ocean* still AWOL

Although **Maritime Bus** has still not reached the point where it is ready to resume its full operating schedule, they will offer additional service on all routes during the Christmas and New Year holiday period. Daily schedules will operate between Sunday, December 20 and Wednesday, January 6, throughout the three Maritime provinces to meet the needs of travellers over the festive season. The one

exception will be Christmas Day, when none of the routes will operate.



Once again, the return to service by **VIA Rail's Ocean** has been further postponed. The Crown corporation has now cancelled all reservations up to December 31, and issued refunds to customers. No further bookings are being accepted for January and February 2021, but the company still says a return to service before March remains a possibility.

Transport Action Atlantic has prepared a full update on regional developments, including changes to air services.

[Read more here](#)

TAO continues dialogue with Federal Ministers on Passenger Rail in Canada and the Corridor

Transport Action Ontario has been engaged in a letter dialogue with key federal ministers on improving passenger rail in Canada. We received response letters referencing the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*, the *Transportation 2030: A Strategic Plan for the Future of Transportation in Canada*, and VIA's High Frequency Rail (HFR) proposal.

TAO has now sent a reply expressing our concerns with the Transportation 2030 Plan. We also discussed the importance of a frequency improvement project in the corridor, be it HFR or another approach using existing freight rail corridors along Lake Ontario.

[Our letter can be viewed here.](#)

Vancouver Island Transportation Corridor Coalition Launched

A new community coalition has been launched to promote the restoration of passenger rail service on Vancouver Island, advocating frequent modern services closely coordinated with other modes.



The VITCC argues that "In accordance with the Province of British Columbia's stated usage of revenues from the BC Carbon Tax, our belief is that restoration of rail has already been paid for by the taxpayers of Vancouver Island."

For more info see <https://www.vitcc.ca>

Transportation Newsround

Work is starting on the new VIA Rail reservation system
<https://www.sqills.com/sqills-enters-north-america-with-s3-passenger-for-via-rail/>

MetroInx CEO rejects the idea of phased opening for Crosstown LRT

<https://www.masstransitmag.com/rail/infrastructure/article/21157024/verster-eglinton-crosstown-will-open-as-a-complete-line>

Free transit service launches on Manitoulin Island

<https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/free-manitoulin-bus-service-making-it-easier-to-get-around-the-island-1.5146791>

TTC recalling all workers at beginning of November

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2020/10/15/ttc-recalls-remaining-179-furloughed-workers/>

New inter-community bus services around Stratford launch November 16, but face vehicle shortage

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/10/08/kasenberg-not-happy-with-solution-for-transit-launch.html>

Ottawa LRT Phase 3 to Barrhaven would cost \$3bn

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/barrhaven-lrt-would-cost-3b-study>

Group renews call for Ottawa-Gatineau rail loop

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/group-renews-call-for-ottawa-gatineau-rail-loop-and-transformation-of-wellington-street>

REM publishes video preview of West Island stations

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7430872/montreal-gets-sneak-peek-of-new-stations-on-west-island-rem-lines/>

Edmonton Valley Line Southwest construction to begin in 2021

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/team-selected-to-construct-valley-line-west-lrt-expansion-to-lewis-farms-construction-to-begin-in-2021>

Europe: Hardt demonstrates first Hyperloop switch

<https://innovationorigins.com/hardt-rules-the-hyperloop-market-with-their-lane-switching-technology/>

USA: Senator proposes transferring Amtrak's Keystone line to PennDOT

<https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/intercity/will-ownership-of-amtraks-keystone-east-line-transfer-to-pennsylvania/?RAchannel=passenger>

USA: Grants to double Chicago-Minneapolis service, continue 110 mph upgrades on Chicago-Detroit line approved

<https://chi.streetsblog.org/2020/10/19/sign-of-the-times-chicago-minneapolis-amtrak-service-is-expanding-to-twice-daily/>

Europe: Austria investing €3bn/yr in rail infrastructure

<https://www.railtech.com/digitalisation/2020/10/21/obb-invest-17-5-billion-euros-in-railway-masterplan/>

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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