



TRANSPORT ACTION
CANADA



Welcoming Canada's new Minister of Transport

Hello ,

Transport Action welcomes Omar Alghabra, who was appointed to the role of Canada's Minister of Transport on January 12.

As MP for Mississauga Centre, Omar Alghabra will be familiar with many public transit issues and with the proposed "missing link" project that is intended to eliminate a major bottleneck for CN freight heading into Toronto and this facilitate improved passenger services in Southwestern Ontario. He inherits the pending decision on VIA Rail's High Frequency Rail proposal, and we look forward to discussing the need to renew Canada's long distance train fleet with him and his team.



Omar Alghabra replaces Marc Garneau, who served as Minister of Transport since 2015 and is moving on to become Minister of Foreign Affairs. We thank Marc Garneau for his work at Transport Canada, including the decision to proceed with VIA Rail's corridor fleet replacement.

Amid the challenges that Canadians and our public transport networks continue to face, the year ended on a couple of high notes, with significant progress toward reopening the Gaspé line - see below - and the confirmation of additional emergency funding for VIA Rail through 2021 in the federal fall economic update, something Transport Action has been asking for since the spring.

I'm also pleased to report that, despite 2020 having been a tough year for many advocacy organizations, the generosity of supporters like you helped us break even. This positions us well to stand up for public transport in the year ahead. **Thank you!**



Terry Johnson, President
Transport Action Canada

Building better transit and better value

The recording of **Transport Action Ontario's** Annual General Meeting is now online for members to watch and share. The talk by Guest speaker Stephen Wickens, noted transit journalist and researcher, summarized his recent report addressing the alarming cost escalation of subway and LRT projects in Greater Toronto. A good discussion ensued on the cost impacts of deep tunnels, risk sharing in P3 projects, and the value of Ontario's Transit Oriented Communities procurement approach.



Rail freight growing in Québec



Following flood damage to the two existing Gaspésie railway bridges over the Cascapédia River, originally built in the 1890s, construction crews in Cascapédia-Saint-Jules worked tirelessly around the clock to finish the new bridges several months ahead of schedule, opening the bridges and reopening the line to Caplan on Christmas Eve.

This is one of many positive stories for rail freight to come out of Quebec in recent months, in addition of VIA Rail's commitment to restore passenger services to Gaspé once the track and bridge work funded by Transports Québec is completed.

[Full story on our website](#)

Maritime Bus services in northern New Brunswick under threat

UPDATE: *Maritime bus has just announced an extension until the end of January, reporting that discussions with the province are now looking more hopeful. [Details.](#)*

On top of the suspension of VIA Rail services and deep cuts to regional air services, thousands of New Brunswickers may be about to lose their only remaining public transportation link.

With the provincial government unwilling to extend a helping hand to assist it through the

Covid-19 crisis, [Maritime Bus](#) has announced indefinite closure of its services between Moncton and Campbellton and Fredericton and Edmundston, effective January 15.



In April 2020 as the first wave of the pandemic took hold, Maritime Bus carried just 650 passengers – a dramatic plunge from 14,500 in the same month of 2019. The three provincial governments provided a one-time grant at that point to help offset the company's losses, and indicated a willingness to negotiate an ongoing agreement for the duration of the crisis. The tentative deal to help cover the May to December was concluded with officials of all three provinces, but New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs refused to endorse it.

The Higgs government decision ignores the reality that Maritime Bus lost over \$3 million in 2020, and has continued to provide an essential public service on all its existing routes throughout the pandemic – albeit at a reduced level. Transport Action Atlantic has urged the Province to reconsider this regressive policy, which will leave residents of the North Shore and the Upper Valley without any public transportation options.

[Full story on Transport Action Atlantic's website.](#)

Province releases draft of Northern Ontario Transportation Plan

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation released [Connecting the North: A draft transportation plan for Northern Ontario](#) on December 10, 2020.

Transport Action Ontario has reviewed it in detail. We believe it is too highway-centric and needs more emphasis on passenger and rail freight. In particular, it provides no concrete timeline for fulfilling the government's promise to restore passenger rail service between Toronto, North Bay and Cochrane.

[Our detailed review can be found here.](#)



Ontario shortlines under threat

There has been lots of Ontario short-line railway news in the past few weeks. Most importantly, the Huron Central Railway has received 6 months temporary funding to June, 2021 to allow governments more time to negotiate capital funding. Meanwhile, CN has announced it is putting the Algoma Central Railway up for sale, although few details have been provided.

The Town of Orangeville has announced the pending closure of the Orangeville-Brampton Railway in December, 2021. This line currently serves many local industries, supporting hundreds of jobs. The section of this line linking Brampton and Streetsville also has potential for future rail transit use and **Transport Action Ontario** will be urging Metrolinx to acquire the line. [Read our letter.](#)

The Barrie-Collingwood line is also in danger of abandonment and removal. Transport Action Ontario has [written to local stakeholders](#) pointing out the benefits of continued operation.

St. John's, NL walks back Metrobus cuts

Faced with mounting criticism, St. John's City Council has backtracked somewhat on its plan to implement the reduced summer schedule for Metrobus in January, in an effort to meet a severe budget crunch. The 2021 transit subsidy will still apparently be hit by the intended cut of \$800,000, but the savings will now be achieved by deferring planned service improvements, rather than cutting back on frequency during the three most severe months of the year.

[Full story on Transport Action Atlantic's website.](#)

Metrolinx unveils transit business cases, SSE delay

In a flurry of December announcements, Metrolinx released updated business cases for 3 rapid transit projects in Greater Toronto - the 15.5 km Ontario Line, plus Bus Rapid Transit lines on Dundas Street (40 km) and Queen Street in Brampton (24 km). All show Benefit Cost Ratios greater than 1. While the Ontario Line has provincial funding commitments, and indeed has gone out for contractor bids, it still awaits a federal funding commitment. The two BRT lines are unfunded at present.

Ontario also announced that Scarborough Subway Extension will not be operational until 2030. The aging Scarborough Rapid Transit line will fail before that, meaning years of buses as a stop-gap. **Transport Action Ontario** has strongly opposed the technology selection (subway) for this corridor, due to the extra cost, and will continue to advocate for lower-cost options.

Transportation Newsround

Orangeville to end freight services on Orangeville-Brampton railway in December 2021

<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/12/18/end-of-the-line-service-on-the-100-year-old-rail-line-through-orangeville-to-cease-dec-31-2021.html>

VIA rail Q3 results reflect pandemic impact, federal government funding support

<https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/intercity/for-via-rail-plunging-revenues-ridership/>

Toronto Region Board of trade calls for fare integration

<https://thepointer.com/article/2020-12-13/could-fare-integration-fix-the-gta-s-transit-woes-and-help-meet-carbon-targets>

Metrolinx releases design business case for Ontario Line

<https://urbantoronto.ca/news/2020/12/metrolinx-releases-preliminary-design-business-case-ontario-line>

Ottawa's decision to proceed with transit fare increase slammed

<https://capitalcurrent.ca/citys-decision-to-raise-bus-lrt-f>

Kitchener Waterloo moves Mobility Plus transit booking online

<https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/waterloo-region-changing-mobilityplus-service-1.5224591>

Winnipeg Transit Plus service area extended

<https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg-s-transit-plus-now-covers-entire-city-1.5251373>

Scarborough RT will shut down long before subway extension opens

https://www.thestar.com/news/city_hall/2020/12/10/scarborough-rt-will-shut-down-before-subway-is-finished-mayor-says.html

Tshuëtin Rail Transportation celebrates 15 years

<https://lenord-cotier.com/transport-ferroviaire-tshuëtin-celebre-ses-15-ans/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/06/travel/tshuëtin-railroad-canada.html>

Calgary looks to expand transit beyond city boundaries

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/next-stop-chestermere-plans-for-transit-link-from-calgary-moving-ahead>

Algoma Central tourist train expected to run in 2021 even though the line is for sale

<https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/with-or-without-a-new-owner-tour-train-expected-to-run-next-year-3183655>

Lambton Shores launches Grand Bend, London, Sarnia bus links

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/lambton-shores-launches-grand-bend-194204905.html>

Metrolinx to restore historic Aurora station building

<https://www.newmarkettoday.ca/coronavirus-covid-19-local-news/auroras-historic-go-train-station-getting-a-face-lift-3179079>

Canadian Pacific to develop hydrogen-powered locomotive

<https://calgaryherald.com/business/local-business/cp-rail-to-develop-hydrogen-powered-locomotive>

VIA Rail and Siemens chose Fabasoft to manage technical data and documents for fleet replacement project

<https://financialpost.com/pmnp/press-releases-pmn/business-wire-news-releases-pmn/via-rail-canada-chooses-fabasoft-approve-for-data-exchange-in-mega-scale-project>

Translink picks Bombardier for new Skytrain cars

<https://www.progressiverailroading.com/mechanical/news/TransLink-picks-Bombardier-to-supply-new-SkyTrain-rail-cars--62305>

USA: MTA selects Siemens for dual-mode locomotives

<https://www.theirrtoday.com/2020/12/mta-selects-siemens-to-build-new-dual.html>

USA: New Moynihan concourse at Penn Station opens January 1st

<https://nypost.com/2020/12/24/amtraks-new-penn-station-waiting-hall-opens-jan-1>

USA: Positive Train Control deadline met

<https://trn.trains.com/news/news-wire/2020/12/29-all-railroads-meet-deadline-for-ptc-implementation-interoperability-fra-announces>

USA: Hyperloop Transportation Technologies partners with Ferrovial

<https://www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/ferrovial-signs-hyperloop-framework-deal/>

Europe: Ceneri Base Tunnel completes north-south link through the Alps

<https://railway-news.com/ceneri-base-tunnel-officially-open-completing-the-nrla/>

Europe: Deutsche Bahn, SNCF, OEBB and SBB to expand night train network for 2021

<https://railway-news.com/new-night-trains-in-europe-from-2021/>

Europe: Success for DB Cargo's vegetable oil fuelled locomotive trial

<https://www.railfreight.com/technology/2020/12/10/big-red-goes-green-db-cargo-uk-successfully-trials-vegetable-oil-fuel/>

UK: Network Rail draws up list of "quick win" electrification projects

<https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/network-rail-draws-up-list-of-no-regret-electrification-schemes-16-12-2020>

UK: HS2 cost spiral may defer eastern leg of proposed network

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/dec/15/new-hs2-study-urges-government-to-defer-eastern-leg-to-leeds>

China: Container shortages hit growing China-Europe rail freight network

<https://theloadstar.com/box-shortages-congestion-and-high-rates-now-hitting-china-europe-rail/>

Japan: Toyota unveils autonomous Mobility-as-a-Service shuttle fleet that will serve Olympic

village

<https://global.toyota/en/newsroom/corporate/34527341.html>

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.

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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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