



Happy Spring! \$15bn in transit investment, VIA Rail fleet progress, and a coast-to-coast bus coalition...



Hello ,

As well as the encouraging \$15bn announcement of federal transit funding, the past month has brought confirmation that VIA Rail's new corridor fleet is on schedule. See below for details...

As hinted in our last newsletter, we are pleased to report the launch of a *Coast-to-Coast Bus Coalition* to restore a network of essential bus routes across Canada. This initiative is aligned with Transport Action's mission to promote dependable, effective and sustainable public transportation for all Canadians, and we are proud to support the proposal.

The importance of services to smaller towns and indigenous communities was highlighted in the federal government's announcement of permanent transit funding, so the two initiatives could mesh very nicely!

Meanwhile, our campaign for the restoration of the Northlander train in Ontario resulted in hundreds of letters and emails being sent to MPPs and attracted media attention in the region. Thank you to everyone working to make this campaign powerful.

We're also beginning to plan for our national Annual General Meeting this spring, which will once again be held online this year. I look forward to sharing more details in next month's newsletter. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on our national board or getting more involved in your region, please reach out by [replying](#) to his newsletter or to any board member.

Your support makes our work possible, and by setting up a [monthly donation](#) you can ensure your membership is always current while helping to support our the research and advocacy

work of our volunteers.



Terry Johnson, President
Transport Action Canada

Federal government announces \$15bn for public transit and electric buses

On February 10th, the Government of Canada announced \$14.9 billion for public transit projects over the next eight years, including permanent funding of \$3 billion per year beginning in 2026. This long-term capital funding will provide new subway lines, light rail, streetcars, electric buses, cycling paths and improved rural transit. The funding includes \$5.9 billion in short-term funding for "shovel-ready" projects, starting this year.

A subsequent announcement earmarked \$2.75 billion of this funding, over five years, for the electrification of transit and school bus fleets across the country, making good on the government's pledge to fund 5,000 zero-emission buses.

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



Coast-to-coast motorcoach network proposed



Leaders in the motorcoach industry have been working together since the beginning for the year to develop a proposal to reconnect services across Canada through a Coast-to-Coast Bus Coalition and the re-assumption of federal regulatory responsibility for protecting a national network of essential routes. This would include the restoration of interline reservations and package services across Canada, which have largely been lost since Greyhound pulled out of western Canada in 2018.

The proposal was submitted to the federal government at the end of February.

Transport Action Canada has written to the Minister of Transport, Omar Alghabra, and Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Catherine McKenna, welcoming and supporting the recommendations of the Coast-to-Coast Bus Coalition. We commend leaders in the motorcoach industry for their efforts to preserve essential services throughout the difficulties of the past year, and for rising to the challenge of preparing for an inclusive and robust recovery by envisioning the revival of a comprehensive network of bus services and connections with VIA Rail passenger train services, which leaves no Canadian behind.

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

A vision for public transportation in the Maritimes

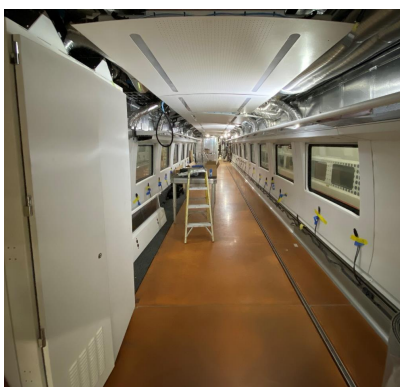


"The old saying in downeast Maine, '*You can't get there from here*,' nearly became reality for people needing to travel between northern and southern New Brunswick last month, unless they could drive," writes David Coon, the leader of the New Brunswick Green Party and the MLA for Fredericton South, in a guest column for Transport Action Atlantic setting out his vision for the creation of a Maritime Transportation Authority to revive and nurture an integrated public transportation network for the Atlantic provinces.

"I envision a seamless system of regional passenger rail, motor coach, and local transit services that are a mix of private, public and community enterprises. We already have PEI-based Maritime Bus delivering some bus services, which could be expanded. There are community-based transit services in some areas, ferry services in others, but no rail. It is time for a Maritime rail service to be knitted into the mix. One ticket should get you where you want to go, from door to door."

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

Siemens Venture cars for VIA Rail on schedule



In a presentation to the *Next Generation Equipment Committee* on February 23rd, VIA Rail Canada confirmed that the delivery of the first new Siemens Venture transit for the Quebec-Windsor corridor is on schedule for the second quarter of the year, and revealed photographs of car interiors in an advanced state of construction.

Testing will start on the line between Ottawa and Coteau, with second trainset to be delivered later in the fall, followed by six months of intensive testing in the rigours of the Canadian winter.

The first passengers will be welcomed aboard a year from now, and eight further consists delivered by the end of 2022.

The first locomotive, to be numbered VIA 2200, is also complete and the second is in final assembly. Formal unveiling of these units and their new livery is expected in April.

Provincial survey finds strong desire for rail

The province of Ontario has released the results of a survey of residents along the Toronto, North Bay and Cochrane route, conducted in Fall 2020.

Over 7,000 people responded, with 69% indicating an interest in trying a future rail service departing once a day with fares equivalent to intercity bus.

Transport Action Ontario and its affiliates continue to press for a commitment in the upcoming 2021 Budget for the return of the *Northlander* train.



Costly Toronto subway projects move ahead

The Ontario government has announced the selection of the consortia who will construct the tunnels for two planned subway projects – the Scarborough Subway Extension and the Eglinton Crosstown West (LRT) Extension. **Transport Action Ontario** has long expressed concern with both projects.

For Scarborough, one claimed advantage of tunnelling was that the existing Scarborough RT would not have to close during construction of the subway. With the revelation that a new deep-tube subway would not be finished until 2030 and that the RT will not run past 2023, that argument is moot. TAO continues to engage with elected officials at the City and Provincial level to advocate for the consideration of various surface options, particularly the approach of constructing a branch line from the existing GO Transit commuter rail line.

Similarly, for Eglinton West, we believe that a surface or elevated option on this wide suburban corridor is more cost effective, could be built sooner, and would save the province at least \$1.5bn.

These two deep-tube tunneling choices will cost the province in excess of \$3bn more than surface options, and also considerably more than cut-and-cover tunneling or an elevated alignment – money that we believe could much better be spent on other public transportation projects all across Ontario.

CIB to study New Westminster Rail Bridge



The Canada Infrastructure Bank announced on February 2nd that they are commencing a

study to examine options for the replacement of the New Westminster Rail Bridge over the Fraser River between Surrey and Burnaby. This single-track truss, which has a swing bridge section in the middle of the navigation channel, was built in 1904 and is now more than 100 years old.

The bridge is owned by the Canadian government but operated and maintained by Canadian National. Canadian Pacific, BNSF and the Southern Railway of British Columbia all have trackage rights for freight trains. VIA Rail's Canadian and Amtrak Cascades trains from Seattle also usage the bridge, making it an increasingly brittle bottleneck in the lower mainland rail network. (Photo: [Mike via Flickr](#))

Southwestern Ontario Transportation Task Force

The Ontario government released its draft transportation plan for southwestern Ontario in early 2020, which recommended several encouraging new actions supportive of improved passenger rail and regional bus services. However, progress on these actions stalled for the remainder of the year.

The province has now implemented one of the actions, namely formation of a Task Force of mayors and chiefs, chaired by Mayor Ed Holder of London. The Task Force will meet regularly over the next 12 months and present recommendations to the Ontario government. **Transport Action Ontario** and its affiliates in the region have reached out to members of the Task Force and intend to provide input at the earliest opportunity.

[Read more](#)

Transportation Newsround

Barrie to build transit hub at Allendale GO station

<https://barrie360.com/barries-transit-vision-sets-sights-on-planning-for-the-citys-new-transit-hub/>

Thunder Bay workers 'more positive' after Alstom completes acquisition of Bombardier rail division

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/alstom-thunder-bay-bombardier-plant-1.5898186>

News buses and terminal upgrade approved for Sarnia

<https://www.theobserver.ca/news/local-news/sarnias-27-7-million-transit-upgrade-spending-plan-approved>

Alberta government approves Edmonton regional transit integration

<https://www.stalberttoday.ca/local-news/more-bus-for-its-buck-province-signs-off-on-regional-transit-plan-2-3303139>

Support for the Northlander continues to grow

<https://www.mynorthbaynow.com/79516/push-for-northlanders-return-gaining-support/>

Town of Cochrane signs on to Bow Valley mass transit project

<https://www.cochranetoday.ca/local-news/town-of-cochrane-endorses-memorandum-of-understanding-in-pursuit-of-bow-valley-corridor-mass-transit-system-3313660>

Winnipeg councillor promotes fare free transit

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/vivian-santos-winnipeg-transit-fare-free-1.5900158>

With all 26 trains now on the property, Edmonton Valley Line Southeast LRT is energizing more catenary.

<http://transedlrt.ca/updates/energization-of-overhead-wires-on-the-valley-line-southeast-lrt-2/>

Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie continues to push for "missing link" rail connection

<https://thepointer.com/article/2021-02-06/the-missing-link-would-deliver-subway-style-train->

[service-in-mississauga-so-why-won-t-queen-s-park-or-ottawa-step-up](#)

TTC says it lost revenue to ride hailing, ride companies say many rides are to transit hubs
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/the-ttc-is-losing-more-revenue-to-uber-and-lyft-than-to-fare-evasion-report-1.5907788>

Thunder Bay sees hope for railcar plant in federal transit funding announcement
<https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/federal-spending-plan-for-public-transit-may-help-thunder-bays-alstom-plant-3370324>

Drummondville eyes possibility of VIA Rail hub or layover facility
<https://www.ccid.qc.ca/drummondville-doit-se-positionner-sur-le-terrain-de-larocque-et-fils/>

Report finds lack of awareness of transit in Summerside PEI, recommends improvements
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-summerside-transit-report-1.5911869>

Ottawa LRT train frequency reduced to reduce costs, accelerate maintenance
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/transit-commission-march-april-reduced-trains-1.5916941>

NEORN, CAPT and Transport Action campaign for the Northlander getting attention
<https://www.saultstar.com/news/advocates-urge-government-to-get-trains-chugging-with-spring-budgets>

WestJet cuts four more routes, including St. John's, N.L.
<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/westjet-temporarily-suspending-service-to-4-canadian-airports-1.5314169>

Peterborough County Council renews support for HFR
<https://globalnews.ca/news/7647720/peterborough-via-rail-high-frequency-line-support/>

With the RT set to close in 2023, Scarborough residents are tired of being ignored.
<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2021/02/21/with-the-scarborough-rt-closing-residents-says-theyre-tired-of-being-ignored-its-time-they-had-a-voice-in-the-future-of-their-transit.html>

Youngest ever TTC Commissioner joins board
<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/this-26-year-old-toronto-man-is-the-youngest-ever-ttc-commissioner-1.5324249>

Kelowna region residents asked for transit feedback
<https://www.vernonmorningstar.com/news/lake-country-residents-asked-for-transit-feedback/>

O-Train's original Bombardier Talents likely to be scrapped
<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/citys-original-o-train-bombardier-vehicles-heading-for-the-scrap-heap>

USA: California HSR failed to secure right of way access
<https://www.railjournal.com/passenger/high-speed/california-hs-project-delay-down-to-lack-of-right-of-way-access/>

France: 14 hydrogen train projects in progress
<https://www.railjournal.com/fleet/french-government-supports-hydrogen-train-project/>

France: Five regional railway lines saved by new funding
<https://www.railjournal.com/financial/funding-granted-to-save-five-french-lines/>

USA: New locomotives and refurbished bilevel coaches enter service on San Diego Coaster
<https://gonctd.com/nctd-celebrates-service-roll-out-for-new-coaster-locomotive-and-overhauled-passenger-cars/>

USA: Lexington, NC start work on new Amtrak station and bus hub
<https://www.masstransitmag.com/rail/news/21211909/nc-all-aboard-lexington-gears-up-for-passenger-rail-project>

New Zealand: Hamilton-Auckland service ready to launch

<https://www.railpage.com.au/news/s/hamilton-auckland-connector-is-ready-to-roll>

UK: Station reopened after 56 years.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/bow-street-station-opens-wales-credigion-b1802323.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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