



TRANSPORT ACTION  
CANADA

## Rural Transit Solutions Fund announced VIA Rail Vancouver-Toronto restart planned



Hello ,

While editing this newsletter, Transport Action received the welcome news that VIA Rail plans to resume services between Winnipeg and Toronto on May 17th, restoring an important transportation link across northern Ontario. VIA Rail is monitoring pandemic developments in Ontario closely, and could adjust this timeline if necessary. See our website for details:

[VIA Rail service to resume across Northern Ontario](#)

One of our key advocacy themes has been to make sure everyone has access to safe and reliable public transport, so we welcome the new **Rural Transit Solutions Fund** announced by the federal government on March 29th as a stream within the \$15bn of new transit funding announced last month.

This program's \$250 million over five years is a small amount of money, but if deployed carefully it could make a mighty difference to mobility in rural Canada. For example, in the picture above, showing the eastbound Canadian stopping at Sioux Lookout, we might soon see a connecting bus, carrying passengers from Dryden and other communities in northwestern Ontario with through tickets to Toronto and a guaranteed connection.

This funding also dovetails with the proposal for a *Coast-to-Coast Bus Coalition* to restore a network of essential bus routes across Canada, connecting first-few-miles rural transit

networks to each other and to VIA Rail for longer journeys.

We've already participated in roundtables organized by Infrastructure Canada and the Rural Ontario institute, contributing our experience and pressing home our message of intermodality and building a national public transport system with integrated ticketing to make all public transport services easier to use.

We're also please to announce details of our national Annual General Meeting for 2021, which will once again be held online this year, and our guest speaker. See bellow for details!



Terry Johnson, President  
Transport Action Canada

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## 2021 Annual General Meeting

### Guest Speaker: Mike Cassidy

CEO, Maritime Bus / Coach Atlantic

*"Rebuilding a coast to coast bus network"*



**When:** Saturday May 29th, 2021

1 pm (Eastern) / 10 am (Pacific)

**Where:** Zoom Online Video and Telephone Conference

To make sure you get your invitation and registration link for our Annual General Meeting, please ensure your membership is up to date:

Join or Renew  
Now

Becoming a member for just \$30 per year or making a regular monthly donation also helps support our public transport research and advocacy across Canada.

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.

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## Toronto Region Board of Trade proposes Trillium Network of regional rail services



The Toronto Region Board of Trade released ***Getting on the Right Track: Connecting Communities with Regional Rail***, a report calling for significant expansion of the GO network and increased service frequency on March 29th.

The report suggests that the most effective and economical way to meet the Toronto region's growing transportation challenges is to build a regional rail network, using the current 450-kilometre network of existing and legacy rail corridors. The "Trillium Network" proposed in the report, would be modelled after successful regional rail systems in other cities around the world like Berlin's S-Bahn and the RER in Paris.

The report also calls for the Orangeville-Brampton railway corridor to be protected for public transport use, and a new cross-city link avoiding Union Station by following Canadian Pacific's right of way from Mississauga to Scarborough.

[More details at UrbanToronto.ca](http://UrbanToronto.ca)

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## Marine Atlantic rate increased reversed



**Transport Action Atlantic's** ongoing campaign to reduce ferry rates, and with them the cost of living and doing business in Newfoundland, has shown its first sign of progress.

Transport Canada appears to have backed down on its demands for 65% cost recovery – at least for 2021.

After just five days under a new tariff that increased passenger fares on the seasonal

Argentia ferry and freight transportation and handling charges on both its routes, the federal Crown corporation announced a price rollback to 2020 levels. Customers who had paid higher rates for completed or future travel are to receive refunds.

[Full story on Transport Action Atlantic's website](http://TransportActionAtlantic.ca)

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## National Active Transportation Strategy announced



Transport Action Canada welcomes the announcement on March 12th of \$400 million for Canada's first dedicated active transportation fund, and the launch of Canada's first National Active Transportation Strategy.

While \$130 million has been invested in active transportation infrastructure over the past five years, that money has come from the same funding envelope as transit projects, leading municipalities to take an either/or approach that

was at odds with the reality: People walk and bike to the bus or train.

[Read more on our website](#)

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## VIA Historical Association launched

While Transport Action's mission is to work for expanded passenger rail services and new equipment, we often look back to the more extensive VIA Rail network before the cuts of 1990 and so we are delighted that a new charity has been formed to preserve equipment from the "Blue and Yellow" era, and to ensure the preservation of the current generation of equipment once VIA Rail's new fleet arrives.

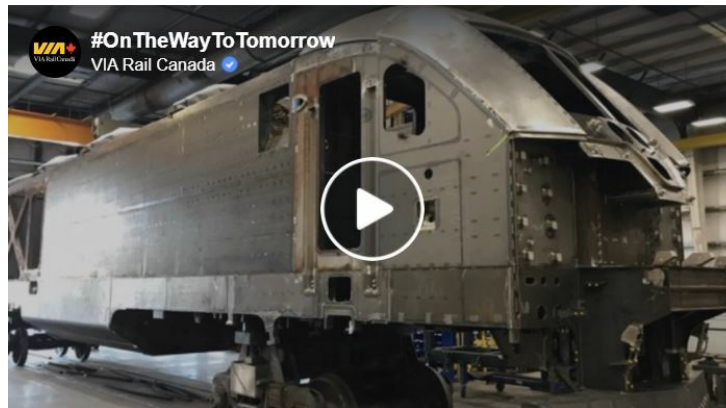


Canadian model railroad manufacturer Rapido Trains Inc. has transferred ownership of RDC 6133, which last ran in VIA service on Vancouver Island, and the E-series sleeper Edmundston, together with several other pieces of equipment to the VIA Historical Association. The association aims to have a restored consist of historic equipment ready for VIA Rail's 50th anniversary in 2028.

Find out more at <https://www.viahistory.ca>

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## VIA Rail releases new fleet teaser video



With the delivery of the first new train for testing soon approaching, VIA Rail have released a "teaser" video on social media that includes a few shots of the trains being built at the Siemens factory in Sacramento, and a brief clip which suggests the final paint scheme might be quite different from the original renderings. Click on the image above to play the video.

Many details of the design details and differences between the VIA Rail and Amtrak Charger

and venture fleets under wraps. One thing we do know for sure is that the noses of the VIA Rail variant of the Siemens Charger will be more streamlined than the Amtrak Long Distance units, while using the same bolted design that allows quick repairs if necessary.

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## Federal funding for BC Bus North

BC Bus North, which launched its services across northern British Columbia in June 2018, has received an additional year of funding from federal agency Western Economic Diversification Canada, ensuring continuity of services through to March 2022.

BC Bus North current serves four routes, with two round trips each week between Prince George and Prince Rupert, Valemount and Prince George, Prince George and Fort St. John, and one weekly round trip between Dawson Creek and Fort Nelson.



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## Ontario Budget keeps Northlander hopes alive

The Ontario budget, tabled on March 24th, kept alive hopes that the government might meet its self-imposed deadline of restoring the Northlander before the next election, with the following announcement:

*"Ontario is committed to reviewing initiatives to meet transportation needs in the North to optimize bus services and to develop options for passenger rail services across Northern Ontario. In keeping with the draft Transportation Plan for Northern Ontario, the government is accelerating work to examine safety and infrastructure needs for potential future passenger rail service between Toronto, North Bay, Timmins and Cochrane. Ontario is investing \$5 million to support planning and design work. An initial business case is being finalized and is expected to be released in spring 2021."*

This is a major success brought about by the campaigns from **Transport Action Ontario**, the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network and the Coalition Promoting Muskoka Rail Travel. A letter writing campaign in advance of the budget resulted in nearly 500 letters being sent to Ontario MPPs.

Lucille Frith and Howie Wilcox thanked all those invested in getting the Northlander back on the track and for their ongoing and never waning enthusiastic support over the last 8 ½ years. "As Co-Chairs of the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network advocacy group, we were both holding our breath with this budget – hoping to hear about the return of passenger rail service to northeastern Ontario."

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## Transportation Newsround

Hamilton trialing biogas for bus fuel

<https://bayobserver.ca/2021/03/04/turning-garbage-into-fuel-for-transit/>

Belleville upgrading bus fleet

<https://www.intelligencer.ca/news/local-news/city-taking-delivery-of-five-new-transit-buses-to-upgrade-bus-routes>

Medicine Hat expending on-demand transit

<https://chatnewstoday.ca/2021/03/02/city-looking-to-expand-on-demand-transit-after-pilot-sees-success/>

Huntsville council calls for reinstatement of Northlander train

<https://doppleronline.ca/huntsville-council-lobbies-for-the-return-of-passenger-rail/>  
Ottawa's Trillium Line LRT months behind schedule, says SNC-Lavalin

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/trillium-line-116-days-behind-schedule-says-snc-lavalin-1.5934598>

Industry supports Cape Breton rail preservation

<https://www.thetelegram.com/business/regional-business/cape-breton-rail-preservation-gets-regional-support-from-private-sector-559719/>

Winnipeg publishes 25-year transit master plan

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7683607/winnipeg-transit-25-year-master-plan-city-hall/>

UWaterloo to pilot unpiloted campus shuttles

<https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/self-driving-shuttle-bus-could-be-coming-to-university-of-waterloo-campus-this-year-1.5339749>

Ottawa station upgrade achieves environmental excellence

<https://www.constructioncanada.net/via-rail-earns-leed-gold-for-ottawa-station/>

CP to use Ballard technology for hydrogen fuel cell locomotive

<https://www.progressiverailroading.com/mechanical/news/CP-to-employ-Ballard-fuel-cells-in-hydrogen-locomotive-project--62910>

CP to acquire Kansas City Southern for \$25bn

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2021/03/21/cp-rail-signs-deal-to-buy-kansas-city-southern-for-us25-billion-2/>

West Coast Express locomotives get midlife refresh, improved HEP.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021TRAN0035-000484>

Atlantic travel bubble may return for summer

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/atlantic-bubble-2-begin-mid-april-1.5954790>

Uber ridership data suggests transit agencies should adjust to serve lower income neighbourhoods better

<https://financialpost.com/pmnbusiness/pmnbusiness-ubers-transit-service-mainly-used-in-lower-income-u-s-city-outskirts-company-data-shows>

NS continue subsidy to keep cape Breton rail options open

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/nova-scotia-subsidy-crumbling-cape-breton-rail-line-1.5963575>

Metrolinx, Thales and Invision AI partner to develop autonomous rail systems

<https://www.masstransitmag.com/alt-mobility/autonomous-vehicles/article/21215488/metrolinx-invision-ai-and-thales-partner-to-develop-av-rail-systems-that-withstand-winter-conditions>

St. Thomas transit enhancements take effect

<https://london.ctvnews.ca/new-enhanced-st-thomas-ont-transit-system-to-begin-monday-1.5365711>

USA: Amtrak starts work on Gulf Coast stations

<https://www.progressiverailroading.com/amtrak/news/Amtrak-to-complete-platform-repairs-on-Gulf-Coast-stations--62906>

USA: Amtrak asks the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to intervene if CSX and Norfolk Southern don't cooperate with Gulf Coast service restoration

<https://www.railwayage.com/passenger/intercity/amtrak-playing-hardball-with-ns-csx-on-gulf-coast-service/>

UK: "Vital" Okehampton to Exeter rail route to restart daily services after 49 years

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-56450227>

UK: More long-closed stations set to reopen

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/full-steam-ahead-for-camp-hill-line-to-reopen-as-final-budget-approved/>

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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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