



TRANSPORT ACTION
CANADA

Transport Action News - June 2021 End of the Greyhound era in Canada



Photograph: [Greyhound buses parked in London, Swire Chin](#)

Hello ,

The remaining Greyhound Canada services, suspended for the past year, were cancelled on May 13th, bring and end to more than ninety years of service.

We've been advocating action to revive and rebuild Canada's motorcoach network for many years, and particularly since the end of Greyhound services in western Canada in 2018, and as [APTN reports](#), the implications for personal safety of a lack of safe transportation make reconnecting services across Canada a clear responsibility of the federal government. You can listen to our reaction to Greyhound's announcement on [CBC The Current](#) and [Ontario Today](#).

Speaking to our AGM on May 29th, Mike Cassidy, CEO of Maritime Bus, shared a vision for the restoration of motorcoach services across Canada by a coalition of regional operators, while noting that the \$250m in new funding for rural transportation, announced this spring, is for municipal and local services, so it does not address the crisis in the motorcoach industry.



While it is still possible to make a bus trip across Canada, with many routes having been restored since 2018 by locally owned and Indigenous-owned operators, there is no national route map, ticketing system, nor timetable, and the Greyhound pull-out leaves significant gaps in service across southern Ontario and between Ontario and Quebec. We have written to Quebec Minister of Transportation François Bonnardel urging the Quebec government to expedite the licensing process for replacement motorcoach services between eastern Ontario and Montreal.

Transport Action met online with the policy team in federal Minister of Transport Omar Alghabra's office to discuss the motorcoach issue, including urging immediate assistance to [ensure the future of DRL Coachlines](#) in Newfoundland, and passenger rail. While also thanking the federal government for the announcement of \$491.2 million in infrastructure funding for VIA Rail, we were able to communicate the need for new and accessible equipment for Canada's long-distance and northern Quebec trains.

This month there are also two pieces of great news from Northern Ontario: The Huron Central Railway is no longer under threat (see *Newsround* below) and I'm pleased to announce that Corina Moore, CEO of Ontario Northland, will be joining us for a live webinar on June 23rd to discuss the recently-released initial business case for reinstating the Northlander train!

Terry Johnson, President
Transport Action Canada

Online Meeting - June 23rd, 11am EDT

Ontario Northland: Passenger Rail Vision

Corina Moore, CEO of Ontario Northland, will join us for a live webinar to discuss Ontario Northland's services, impact and vision, and the initial business case for Northern Ontario Passenger Rail.

Register Now



Northlander business case released



Photograph: [Moon over the Northlander, Jerry Huddleston](#)

Transport Action welcomes the long-awaited [Initial Business Case](#) published by MTO and Ontario Northland on May 25th. We are encouraged that the Government of Ontario plans to move forward with the restoration of passenger rail service between Toronto, the Muskoka region, and Northeastern Ontario based on the clear social equity need for this service and whole-economy spin-off benefits for the north. However, we note that "a potential in-service date in the mid 2020s" is well behind the election promises made by the government, and we urge the Ontario government to move ahead promptly on the key steps still needed for implementation, including a train service agreement with CN and procurement of rolling stock.

For further details, see the [article on the TAO website](#)

First new VIA Rail locomotive emerges



The first Siemens locomotive built for VIA Rail Canada, numbered 2200, emerged fully painted from the factory on Sacramento on May 25th. The first set of coaches and cab car are also nearing completion and will be delivered to begin testing in Canada later this year.

VIA Rail released a [video presentation](#) for their Annual Public Meeting on May 27th, although with pandemic travel restrictions ongoing and the HFR proposal still in the hands of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, few new details were provided in response to public questions about the return of the Ocean to Halifax or regarding future service enhancements elsewhere.

Federal funding committed for GTHA projects

The federal government made several major funding announcements in May supporting public transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area. These were:

- \$10.4B as the federal contribution (40%) for capital for 4 Greater Toronto subway projects – Ontario Line, Eglinton Crosstown West Extension, Yonge North Subway Extension and Scarborough Subway Extension
- \$1.7B as the federal contribution (50%) for capital for the Hamilton LRT project
- \$180M as a 30% contribution to purchase of 60 streetcars for Toronto

Transport Action Ontario welcomes these commitments. We have previously expressed misgivings about the choice of deep tunneling for the Eglinton and Scarborough projects, as we feel that at-grade rail would be more cost-effective. However, the feds have indicated they “respect local decision making and local priorities” and will not second-guess these choices.

Amtrak proposes increased cross-border services



There is increasing recognition on both sides of the Canada-USA border about the need for low or zero-carbon public transportation. This opens up opportunities for the growth of cross-border passenger rail services. Canadian Minister of Transportation Alghabra and US Transportation Secretary Buttigieg talk frequently, and Amtrak's recently released "[Amtrak Connects US](#)" Corridor Vision Plan proposes a restored Chicago-Detroit-Toronto service in addition to increasing services to Vancouver and Montreal.

Transport Action Ontario has produced a [briefing paper](#) on the subject of USA-Canada passenger rail connections. The paper covers:

- Reasons to Improve Passenger Rail Service
- Corridors of Opportunity
- Service Concepts
- Existing Canada/Ontario Initiatives to Build Upon

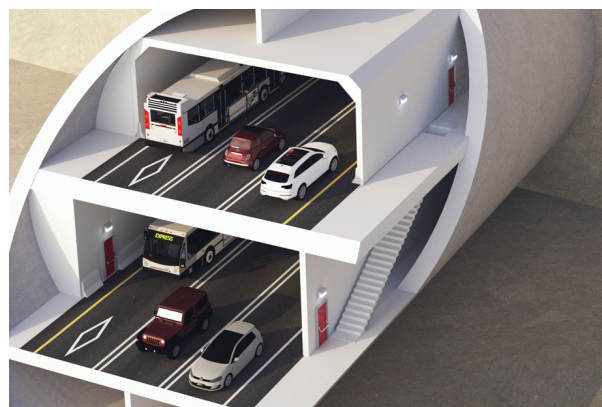
Transport Action BC and **Transport Action Ontario** are also reaching out to neighbouring state and regional public transport groups in the United States to discuss these proposals and develop joint advocacy projects to bring forward.

Quebec tunnel would not include tramway link

Following last month's agreement for the Quebec Tramway, the province has also announced funding for the long-debated tunnel between Québec City and Lévis as part of the "Réseau express de la Capitale"

The \$7bn road tunnel, expected to take a decade to build, will include bus lanes in each direction and two bus stations under the city, with interchange to the tramway.

However, the idea of a light-rail connection to Lévis has fallen out of favour and is not included.



Équiterre, Accès Transports viables, Trajectoire Québec, the David Suzuki Foundation, Vivre en ville and the Conseil régional de l'environnement de la Capitale-Nationale are joining forces to campaign against the proposed highway tunnel, with highway expansion being only likely to increase suburban traffic congestion and at odds with the Quebec government's greenhouse gas reduction commitments. A petition on the nonautroisiemilien.quebec website gained more than 25,000 signatures in the first 48 hours.

Win: Federal Impact Assessment for Highway 413

As discussed in our February News, the campaign to stop Highway 413 in Ontario continues full speed, involving municipal deputations, webinars, lawn signs and media. Most of the municipalities on or near the route have resolved to oppose it. There is a growing consensus that rapid transit, combined with transit-oriented development, is more effective for moving people. For truck movement, a recent report by **Transport Action Ontario** shows that providing a toll subsidy for trucks on Highway 407ETR is much lower cost than constructing and maintaining a new expressway.

We are pleased to report that, on May 4, Federal Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson ruled favourably on a request by 8 non-government organizations, including TAO, to designate the Highway 413 project for a federal Impact Assessment (IA). Although the scope of the IA is not yet known, we expect that this will create a “sober second look” at all aspects of the project, including identification of superior alternatives like transit and truck toll subsidies.

Transportation Newsround

CTA rules Rider Express must do more to accommodate passengers with disabilities
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/rider-express-wheelchair-accessible-buses-1.6007731>

Huron Central Railway saved, will receive NCTF funding
<https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/breaking-genesee-wyoming-to-continue-operating-huron-central-railway-3812969>

VIA 2020 Annual Report shows 80% revenue hit from pandemic
<https://www.netnewsledger.com/2021/05/19/via-rail-reports-80-per-cent-drop-in-passenger-revenue-in-2020/>

Quebec budget provides further funding for Gaspé railway
<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1786674/rail-train-routes-travaux-argent-investissement-bonnardel>

MP calls for electric train service in the Kootenay region
<https://www.crestonvalleyadvance.ca/news/kootenay-columbia-mp-exploring-electric-passenger-train-service/>

Technology: New Flyer launches off-the-wires capable trolleybus
<https://www.newflyer.com/site-content/uploads/2021/04/Xcelsior-Trolley-Brochure.pdf>

YRT cuts services due to pandemic
<https://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/10385160-yrt-service-changes-begin-on-sunday-may-2/>

Canmore COLT buses demonstrate potential of DRT
<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/drive/mobility/article-alberta-towns-colt-vehicles-show-the->

[potential-of-demand-responsive/](#)

Toronto union Station VIA platform to be reconfigured

<https://blog.metrolinx.com/2021/05/06/torontos-union-station-slated-for-new-shared-platform/>

Public consultations opened for REM East

<https://driving.ca/auto-news/local-content/rem-de-lest-design-pits-function-against-form>

Planning tribunal spikes Toronto rail deck park plan

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2021/05/12/rail-deck-park-toronto-craft-development-local-planning-appeal-tribunal/>

Edmonton airport turns to Japan's NTT to develop on-demand transit app

<https://edmontonjournal.com/technology/tech-biz/edmonton-airport-teams-up-japanese-company>

Translink names new CEO

<https://www.metro-magazine.com/10143770/vancouvers-translink-names-new-ceo>

Ottawa sues RTG

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7873699/ottawa-lrt-rideau-transit-group-lawsuit/>

Maritime Bus president wants Canada-wide bus service maintained

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pe-bus-greyhound-service-1.4741937>

Innisfil partners with DriverSeat for accessible transit service

<https://barrie360.com/town-of-innisfil-offering-new-wheelchair-transit-option/>

Metrolinx's Journey Towards Inclusivity

<http://inmagazine.ca/2021/05/metrolinx-journey-towards-inclusivity/>

Ontario NDP skeptical of Ford government's timeline for the Northlander

<https://www.baytoday.ca/local-news/election-promise-to-restore-northlander-during-first-term-in-office-was-hollow-electioneering-says-ndp-3808759>

Cornwall Council concerned that city would receive less service with HFR.

<https://www.cornwallseawaynews.com/2021/05/26/council-balks-at-via-high-frequency-rail-plans/>

<https://www.standard-freeholder.com/news/local-news/cornwall-council-gets-out-in-front-of-via-changes-by-voicing-concerns>

CP, Government of Canada reach funding agreement for Lac Megantic bypass

https://www.progressiverailroading.com/canadian_pacific/news/CP-Canadian-government-forge-pact-on-Lac-Megantic-bypass--63618

Transport Canada updates railway track safety rules

<https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2021/05/government-of-canada-approves-changes-to-improve-railway-track-safety.html>

USA: Congress, STB try to help Amtrak get on track with performance metrics

<https://www.freightwaves.com/news/congress-stb-try-to-help-amtrak-get-on-track-with-performance-metrics>

USA: Virginia reaches agreement with Norfolk Southern to extend Amtrak service to Christiansburg

<https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/ts/news/world/us/2021/05/05/northam-announces-deal-to-expand-rail-in-southwest-virginia.html>

Europe: Eurostar secures £250m rescue package

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57157376>

Europe: Overnight train resurgence continues

https://www.railjournal.com/in_depth/getting-overnight-travel-back-on-track

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

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