



TRANSPORT ACTION
CANADA

Transport Action News - July 2021



The Hon. Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport, and Cynthia Garneau, President & CEO of VIA Rail Canada, announcing the government's commitment to improving passenger rail in the corridor

Electrified, 200 km/h High Frequency Rail

Hello ,

Last Thursday, I attended the announcement at Toronto Union Station that the government intends to start procurement this fall on the "High Frequency Rail" upgrade to VIA Rail's corridor services between Toronto, Montreal and Quebec City. This announcement included confirmation that the new route would be electrified, and the intended top speed has been raised to 200 km/h. Many questions remain, and we will continue to seek answers to these in the coming months.

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

Following the announcement I was also able to discuss other issues, including the long-awaited reinstatement of the *Ocean* which has since been confirmed, with VIA Rail President and CEO

Cynthia Garneau, the first face-to-face meeting we've been able to arrange. After so many months of virtual meeting and avoiding non-essential travel, it was also wonderful just to be back on the train.

On the same morning, on the other side of the country, Aecom and EllisDon unveiled a partnership aimed at building a new high-speed line between Calgary and Edmonton, and this was followed a few days later by the announcement that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has moved the Calgary-Banff passenger rail project to the next phase. We'll have more on these developments in our next newsletter. Combined with the announcement that the Quebec government has funded a feasibility study to return passenger service to Sherbrooke, that makes four significant steps forward in one week!

There have been more than a few false dawns for passenger rail in Canada over the last 40 years, but real progress seems to be on the cards at last. Your continued advocacy as a member of Transport Action has helped to get us to this point, and I would like to pass on thanks from both Minister Omar Alghabra and Cynthia Garneau for your perseverance. We won't relax until we can do so on the new trains.

Meanwhile, our ongoing advocacy for Northern Ontario passenger rail, rebuilding a coast to coast bus network, and other projects has continued. *We're all volunteers, and we could use a little help!* If you're able to devote a few hours a month to public transport policy research and communications, especially in western Canada, please reply to this newsletter.

Sincerely,



Terry Johnson, President
Transport Action Canada

Support our
Campaigns

Ontario Northland: Passenger Rail Vision

Our webinar with **Corina Moore, CEO of Ontario Northland**, discussing Ontario Northland's services, impact and vision, and the initial business case for Northern Ontario Passenger Rail is now available to watch on demand on our YouTube channel:



Audience questions included whether sleeper services would be provided and if additional stops such as South River that were not listed in the initial business case might be reinstated. We'll continue to work with the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network to advocate for these issues to be addressed in the updated business case which is now being prepared, and for the return of the service to fully funded by the Ontario government.

Vancouver Island Passenger Rail ad on CHEK-TV

A thirty-second advertisement encouraging viewers to support the return of passenger rail on Vancouver Island has been running on local independent TV station CHEK. Featuring footage of modern regional trains around the world, the spot emphasizes the need for a green, stress-free and socially inclusive alternative to the congested Malahat highway.



This campaign was jointly funded by Transport Action BC and the Vancouver Island Transportation Corridor Coalition. A big thank you to everybody who made a donation to make this possible. See more updates at <https://www.vitcc.ca/news>

Engagement with the Southwestern Ontario Transportation Task Force

In March 2021, the province established a Transportation Task Force consisting of regional mayors, chiefs and other stakeholders, to build upon the Draft Transportation Plan for Southwestern Ontario, *Connecting the Southwest*, publishing in January 2020. This plan recommended several encouraging new actions supportive of improved passenger rail and regional bus services.

Transport Action Ontario has participated in working group sessions on rail and regional bus services in Southwestern Ontario, and prepared a presentation that included highlighting key rail bottlenecks to be addressed. The Task Force will hold further meetings this summer and

fall, and is charged with providing recommendations to the government by March, 2022.

Regional task forces in northern and eastern Ontario will follow later this year, although the whole process has of course been delayed by the pandemic. [Read more...](#)

Halifax turns to electric ferries to beat traffic

Halifax Transit is moving ahead with a plan to launch a fast, electrified ferry service from Bedford into downtown Halifax, with funding from the federal, provincial and municipal governments announced in June.



A fast ferry service has been proposed a number of times over the years as a solution to traffic congestion on the Bedford Highway, and as a way to provide a more efficient public transit connection into the downtown core. When recent attempts at commuter rail fell through, due to CN's reluctance to offer contractual performance guarantees, ferry service once again rose to the top as a viable option, promising travel times to downtown that can beat driving even at off-peak times, and far exceed anything that is possible by car or bus during rush hour. With the new addition of exploring an all-electric ferry, the service is even more attractive to multiple levels of government that are prioritizing a shift to clean, sustainable public transportation options.

[Full story and more Atlantic transportation news...](#)

TAO calls for investment in VIA management

Transport Action Ontario wrote to Minister Omar Alghabra on June 18th asking the government to invest in strengthening and broadening management and technical capacity at VIA Rail in order to empower the organisation to become a much larger player in Canada's mobility matrix. To achieve Canada's goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, we will have to rebuild Canada's whole passenger rail network, offering a fast, reliable and comfortable alternative to driving or flying.

While VIA Rail already has several major projects on the go, including HFR, the corridor fleet replacement, and a implementing brand new reservation system, these were all launched during Yves Desjardins-Siciliano's tenure as CEO, and we've heard from many sources that more bandwidth to study and deliver new passenger rail opportunities is needed. Following the extreme challenge of managing the Crown Corporation through the pandemic, we believe the current management team is keen to move on to advancing new projects of their own.

The letter also emphasized the need to initiate procurement for a new long distance fleet, and to actively engage with Amtrak's plans to expand cross border services. [Read more...](#)

Sherbrooke-Montreal train feasibility study

L'Alliance du corridor ferroviaire Estrie-Montérégie (ACFEM), which brings together several municipalities, including Sherbrooke, Magog, Bromont, Farnham, Lac-Mégantic and the Brome-Missisquoi regional county municipality, has received \$450,000 from Transports Quebec to launch a feasibility study for passenger rail in the region.

The study is expected to take place over the next two years.

TTC accelerates state of good repair work

The Toronto Transit Commission has avoided the need for as many as 100 weekend closures and the need to bypass Museum and Queen's Park stations on Line 1 for up to two years.

A series of five extended closures during the pandemic enabled state of good repair work, including the replacement of 44,000 sq ft of ceilings, to be brought forward. What would otherwise have been 18 months of work was accomplished in 30 days, putting the line in good shape as passengers begin to return to the network.

Transportation Newsround

Prestige Magazine interviews Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, President and CEO of Siemens Mobility Canada

<https://assets.new.siemens.com/siemens/assets/api/uuid:d1a92b5a-da95-4a50-8ba4-48608e010546/prestigejuin-2021-siemens-v2.pdf>

Milton Transit launches demand-responsive service

<https://www.insauga.com/milton-transit-launches-ondemand-shared-ride-service>

Ottawa Transit Commission gives green light to \$1 billion plan to buy zero-emission buses

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/transit-commission-gives-green-light-to-1-billion-plan-to-buy-zero-emission-buses-1.5473628>

Saskatoon launching smartphone based fare system

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7951287/saskatoon-transit-mobile-fare-payment-system/>

LRT will cost Hamilton between \$6.4M and \$16.5M per year to operate, new report says

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/lrt-hamilton-1.6066060>

Feds giving Ottawa Airport \$6.4M toward LRT station

<https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/federal-government-giving-ottawa-airport-6-4m-toward-future-lrt-station-1.5472537>

New Brunswick MPs call for the return of the Ocean train

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1802225/ocean-train-via-rail-avenir-incertain-classe-politique-nouveau-brunswick>

Bus service between Calgary and Chestermere nearing final approval

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/bus-service-between-calgary-and-chestermere-nearing-final-approval>

Translink installing secure bike lockers

<https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/vancouver-news/translink-adds-solar-powered-on-demand-bike-lockers-at-six-transit-hubs-3887936>

Report suggests ways to tackle racism incidents on Edmonton transit

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-can-make-transit-safer-for-people-of-colour-advisory-board-says-in-report-1.6068224>

USA: Texas Central HSR announces main construction contract, but still seeking funding
<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/20b-dallas-houston-high-speed-rail-project-moves-forward/602127/>

USA: Amtrak to name new Baltimore tunnel in honour of abolitionist Frederick Douglass
<https://www.trains.com/trn/news-reviews/news-wire/amtrak-maryland-announce-new-approach-for-replacement-of-bp-tunnel/>

USA: Superliners to get new upholstery, passengers to get real food once again
<https://www.railpassengers.org/happening-now/news/blog/refreshed-coaches-improved-sleepers-are-days-away/>

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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Thank you again for your continued support!

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