



TRANSPORT ACTION
CANADA

Transport Action News - November 2022

Long distance fleet crisis and HFR outsourcing threaten VIA Rail



A sight of the past? Due to the age of the fleet the Canadian is now operating with a buffer car on the rear, and must receive new equipment soon to continue operating at all. Photo by Steve Boyko.

Hello ,

October marked the tenth anniversary of 2012's devastating cuts to VIA Rail, including reductions in service for the Ocean, Sarnia, and Niagara Falls, and the destaffing of many stations, ending checked baggage services, and reducing accessibility.

VIA Rail's future once again hangs under a cloud, both due to the government's proposal to outsource [High Frequency Rail](#), and due to the discovery of further issues with the aging stainless-steel "heritage" fleet. The issues are structural but not serious enough to take the fleet out of service immediately, instead requiring the deployment of unoccupied buffer cars while

further investigations are carried out. If any further wear and fatigue conditions are discovered, those could trigger the immediate withdrawal of the entirety of VIA Rail's long distance and remote services and the severe curtailment of Corridor frequencies. The abundance of caution expressed by VIA Rail and their engineering consultants is exactly what we expect from our national passenger carrier, and Transport Action fully supports their actions to prioritize safety.

We have held urgent meetings with Transport Canada on this matter, highlighting our past recommendations to start procurement on modern replacement equipment in the hope of averting just such a crisis; and also strongly suggesting that they make additional resources available to help VIA Rail secure any additional equipment that can be found to supplement their fleet in the short term, but with Amtrak also facing fleet availability challenges, there aren't many options.

In meetings with VIA Rail, we have discussed the need to mitigate the near-term impact of this situation, including finding a way to provide food service on the Prince Rupert train. Unfortunately, the reduction in fleet availability also means that the chances of restoring the remaining suspended Corridor services have become slimmer, although we continue to advocate for these to be reinstated as soon as possible, and for the continued public sector operation of the Corridor and High Frequency Rail in the long run.

Looking to the future, Transport Action and some of our volunteers have been participating in conferences and events with the Canadian Urban Transit Innovation Consortium over the past few years, and we have now formalized this relationship by becoming a member organization of the consortium in order to collaborate on their *Smart Rail Innovation Program*. The hydrogen trains now entering regular service in Germany, and shortly to be delivered to California, are equipped with made-in-Canada fuel cell technology. One of the topics we will be working on with CUTRIC is getting that technology on the rails here in Canada, where it has considerable potential to help restore regional services, for example on Vancouver Island.

Also in this newsletter, board member Michael Olivier examines the Hyperloop/FluxJet proposal to connect Calgary and Edmonton.

Sincerely,



Terry Johnson, President
Transport Action Canada

PS: All our work is made possible by members and supporters like you, both through volunteering and donations. Thank you!

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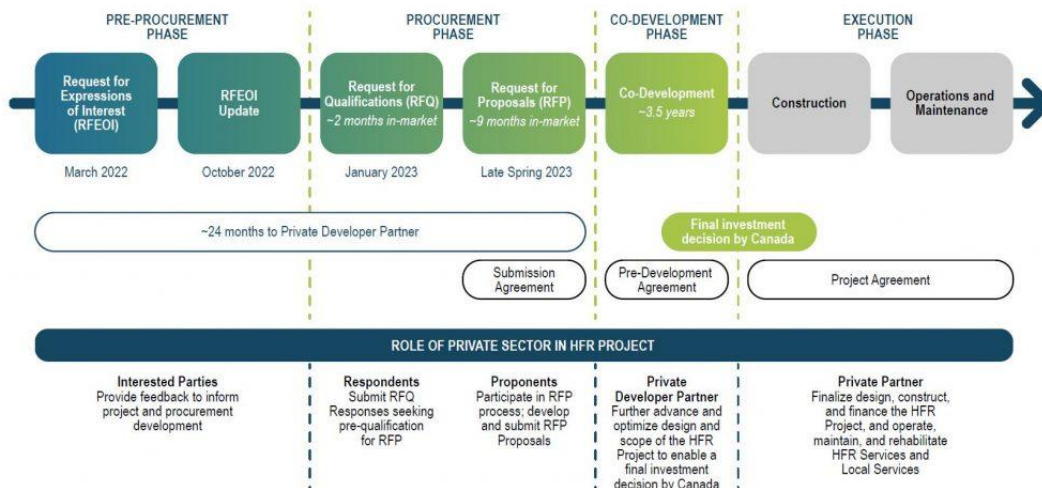


Transport Action welcomes National Supply Chain Task...

Transport Action Canada has reviewed the National Supply Chain Task Force Report and is pleased that federal Minister of Transport Omar Alghabra has publicly acknowledged it as a qualified analysis of Canada's serious supply chain impediments.

[Read more](#)

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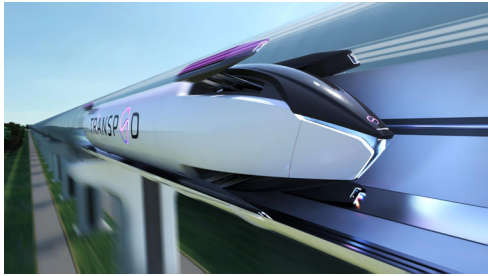


High Frequency Rail progressing too slowly

The High Frequency Rail RFQ originally expected this fall will now be released in the New Year; new VIA Rail subsidiary formed and first executives appointed. We continue to oppose private sector operation of the Corridor.

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Hyperloop prototype unveiling raises questions

TransPod, a Canadian hyperloop startup, unveiled its "FluxJet" vehicle, a proposed very-high-speed ground transportation system, at the Mars Discovery District in Toronto on July 22, 2022. The company presented its pod technology, and...

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Woodstock station in need of repairs

On August 30, 2022, funding was announced for much-needed repairs to several VIA Rail stations in Southwestern Ontario. Unfortunately, Woodstock was not one of the stations named for repairs, despite being a designated heritage station in in...

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Atlantic Transport News - October 2022

VIA "buffer car" order highlights desperate need for new fleet; WestJet plans for 2023 remain unclear; MV Holiday Island to be scrapped; Transit Cape Breton struggling to keep up with ridership growth; Marine Atlantic marks sombre anniversary



Comments on Draft Transportation Plan for Eastern Ontario

In April, 2022, Ontario released the last of its regional transportation plans - this one for Eastern Ontario. Transport Action Ontario (TAO) has reviewed this plan. In general, we find it to be long on ideas but short on specific actions. The...

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Transportation Newsround

Suspension of train 651 causing employment worries for commuters

<https://www.northumberlandnews.com/news-story/10741922-impact-northumberland-workers-families-struggling-with-despair-job-worries-without-reliable-commuter-service/>

Rouge River bridge work completed

<https://blog.metrolinx.com/2022/10/17/rehabilitation-work-on-the-rouge-river-bridge-comes-to-a-close/>

Parks Canada reviewing draft redevelopment plan for Banff train station lands

<https://www.rmotoday.com/banff/parks-canada-reviewing-draft-redevelopment-plan-for-banff-train-station-lands-5949628>

Calgary council to review \$491M electric bus proposal

<https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/calgary-council-to-review-491m-electric-bus-proposal>

Scotiabank waives transaction fees for public transit payments

<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/scotiabank-makes-taking-public-transit-easier-and-more-affordable-by-removing-fees-803211434.html>

Shortage of drivers and mechanics hitting many transit agencies

<https://lfpres.com/news/local-news/staff-shortage-hitting-london-transit-and-may-get-worse-yet>

Transdev acquires First Transit, consolidating position in North America

<https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2022/10/26/first-transit-transdev-acquisition.html>

Metrolinx contract offer to be voted on November 2nd and 3rd

<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2022/10/28/go-transit-union-says-it-will-strike-if-members-reject-offer-from-metrolinx.html>

Peterborough welcomes HFR progress

<https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/news/peterborough-region/2022/10/31/restoration-of-via-rail-service-to-peterborough-takes-another-step-forward.html>

USA: Hydrogen trains using Canadian fuel cells unveiled for California

<https://ca.finance.yahoo.com/news/first-us-hydrogen-train-to-use-canadian-fuel-cells-155116106.html>

Spain: Battery-Electric trains ordered for medium distance services

<https://www.railwaygazette.com/traction-and-rolling-stock/renfe-orders-electric-battery-trainsets/62741.article>

Europe: Railways agree to help passengers who miss connections

<https://www.railtech.com/all/2022/10/24/railways-agree-on-follow-up-journey-without-extra-costs-in-case-of-missed-connection/>

USA: California's Siemens Venture cars ready but not yet in service

<https://www.trains.com/trn/news-reviews/news-wire/california-siemens-say-first-venture-cars-are-ready-but-debut-on-san-joaquins-remains-in-limbo/>

USA: Arrow service launches with Stadler multiple unit trains

<https://www.masstransitmag.com/rail/article/21284812/metrolinks-new-arrow-line-opens-between-san-bernardino-and-redlands>

UK: Flying Scotsman centenary tour unveiled

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/oct/15/the-flying-scotsman-100-centenary-uk-tour>

Germany: Baden-Württemberg concludes that line electrification cheaper than hydrogen over 30 years

<https://www.hydrogeninsight.com/transport/will-no-longer-be-considered-hydrogen-trains-up-to-80-more-expensive-than-electric-options-german-state-finds/2-1-1338438>

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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