



Ontario Report

Transport Action Ontario

(Formerly Transport 2000 Ontario)



At its April 26, 2014, AGM held in Toronto, Transport Action Canada awarded its 2013 Orange Prize to former City of Toronto Planner, Paul J. Bedford "for his contribution towards transit supportive urban planning and sustainable urban transportation in Ontario and at the national level." Photo: David Jeanes.

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Reprieve for Algoma Central's Sault-Hearst train

On April 14, the feds announced that their \$2.2 million annual subsidy for the tri-weekly Sault-Hearst wilderness train will be extended one more year to March 31, 2015. Low ridership and presence of roads are still being mentioned as reasons for the cut. The cut is the first step away from the remote train service funding program started in 1977. The delay is a small victory for the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, the cities of the Sault, Wawa, and Hearst, and others who have worked hard to keep this train. At a meeting of stakeholders held in the Sault April 17, the consulting firm BDO presented its study of the economic impact of the Sault-Hearst train. The study estimates that the train provides from \$38 to \$48 million in direct, indirect and induced economic activity for the region. ■

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2013/14 - PETER MIASEK



The world of Ontario sustainable transportation continued to be very active in the past year. As always, Transport Action Ontario (TAO) has had a busy and very successful year. My report will

cover two aspects—organizational health and a project/program summary.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

It is important that our organization remain healthy so we can carry out our prime mission of educating and advocating for sustainable public and freight transportation.

As a reminder, TAO is affiliated with Transport Action Canada, which is the national organization based in Ottawa, and with other regional affiliates—Transport Action BC, Transport Action Prairies, Transport 2000 Quebec, and Transport Ac-

tion Atlantic. All the affiliates work closely together on both organizational and program matters. In fact, half of your membership fee paid to TAO goes to Transport Action Canada and some TAO directors sit on the board of the national organization. It is important to our Ontario organization that the national organization remains healthy.

In the past year, membership numbers increased modestly, likely as a result of our increased public visibility.

Within Ontario, membership fees and donations provide virtually all our

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Victory in New Brunswick!

On Monday, May 12, in Fredericton, Transport Minister Lisa Riatt announced federal funds to repair the 70 km stretch of CN track between Miramichi and Bathurst that was headed towards abandonment. Premier David Alward and the majors of Miramichi and Bathurst attended the announcement. This will save VIA's *Ocean*, that serves New Brunswick's North Shore and the Gaspé. This is a mayor victory for Transport Action's National Dream Renewed campaign to retain passenger train service between Montreal and Halifax. ■

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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operating income. For 2013, our revenues and costs were in balance, which was a big improvement over the previous year. Our goal is not to make a profit, but it is important to have funds available to respond to advocacy issues or opportunities. The board continues to look for ways to reduce costs and increase revenue.

In October, we initiated our new, upgraded website, which is accessible both directly (www.transport-action-ontario.com) and as a link from the national website.

This new site has numerous features that were absent from the old website:

- > Postings are organized into different categories (eg. urban transit, intercity rail and bus)
- > Able to search the entire website
- > Easy process to add new postings.

As evidence of how busy TAO has been, there are about 50 postings from January 1, 2012 to today. Almost all of these are work products of TAO or affiliated groups. Older items, prior to 2012, will continue to be stored and accessible on the National website.

We continue to publish our acclaimed newsletter, *Ontario Report*, on a bi-monthly basis. All copies, other than the most recent, are posted on the website.

2. MAJOR PROJECT/PROGRAM SUMMARY

We bundle our work into different projects or programs. We are involved in over a dozen projects. Virtually all of these have been written up in the newsletter or on the website over the past year. Summarized below are some of the larger projects that we have been involved with.

a. Regional Rapid Rail for the GTHA. On July 15, TAO released its long-awaited 400-page+ report on GTHA Regional Rapid Rail. In brief, it proposed upgrading and electrifying most of the existing GO network, using EMU's and adding more stations, to convert it to a "surface subway" similar to European approaches such as the London Overground or various cities' S-Bahn systems. Using unit costs taken mostly from previous Metrolinx work, plus contingencies, the average all-in cost, including significant work at Union Station, was estimated to be about \$55M/km, or about 20% of underground subway costs. Apart from Union Station expansion, the timelines for construction would be shorter than subways. It would also largely avoid the politically-sensitive is-

sue of displacing road space for transit. The report is on our website.

TAO owes a huge debt of gratitude to the report author, member Karl Junkin, for this excellent work.

We were very pleased with media reaction. The report was featured on the front page of the GTA section of the *Toronto Star*. Many transit pundits immediately jumped on the concept and started discussing it.

Since July, a team of TAO members has been presenting the report to transit professionals and elected officials at all three levels of government across the region. To date, we have had about 30 meetings.

The reactions continue to be very positive. Metrolinx has agreed to include the approach in their upcoming Relief Line Network Study. York Region will include it for consideration in its Transportation Master Plan Update. Toronto will be considering the findings in its Official Plan Review ("Feeling Congested") per direction from Council. On April 14, Premier Wynne announced electrification of GO with 15 minute service as a keynote program within the "Move Ontario Forward" plan.

b. Intercity Passenger Rail. Last year we reported on our ambitious national program called "National Dream Renewed," launched in response to VIA Rail Canada's passenger service cuts in June, 2012. Between September, 2012 and April, 2013, we held 15 town hall public meetings in Ontario and the Maritimes to raise public, political and media awareness about the benefits of rail and the challenges and solutions. However, the town hall program came to a temporary halt in April, 2013 due to a lack of continued funding. The program revived in early 2014 with three events in Northern Ontario to support advocacy for restoration of passenger rail service on the Algoma Central Railway, and with events in Western Canada.

In addition to town halls, activity on passenger rail continued on other fronts. In June, consultant and colleague Greg Gormick completed a report for Bruce Hyer (MP, Thunder Bay-Superior North), partially funded by TAO, titled "A Wedding Band of Confederation: Restoring Rail Passenger Service to Ontario's North Shore and Across Canada." It again summarized the challenges and solutions for passenger rail in Northern

Ontario and Canada. Later in the year, TAO provided input to the Olivia Chow, NDP team for preparation of a Via Rail Canada Act. This private members bill was introduced in the House of Commons in March, but died when Chow resigned. We have contacted the NDP and will be pushing them to re-table the bill.

One very encouraging sign during 2013 was the formation of numerous local citizens' groups in Ontario, particularly in regions where we had conducted town halls. They are advocating for improved passenger rail at the local level. These include Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, Getting There (Stratford), Northern and Eastern Ontario Rail Network, Rail Action in Lambton, Save VIA (St. Mary's), and Southwest Economic Alliance.

TAO is acting as a common bridge between these groups – passing intelligence, new ideas and support between them. This includes presenting at town hall meetings and workshops, and attending meetings with government staff. Some of these groups were influential in supporting Bill Walker (MPP Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound) as he successfully proposed a resolution at Queen's Park in November to form an all-party Rural and Northern Ontario Transportation Committee. The government turned down this request and we are working on follow-up actions.

These diverse groups all have different strengths – railway expertise, political connections, business contacts, community contacts, media skills, organizing skills. What is exciting is that each is mounting a campaign pointed in the same general direction – restoring and enhancing passenger rail. In aggregate, the reach of these groups is substantial.

c. New Funding Instruments for Transportation. After many years as a political hot potato, the topic of new funding tools for transportation investment, such as taxes, tolls or levies, is definitely now front and centre with the GTHA public and the politicians. In 2013, no less than four expert reports were published – by the Toronto Region Board of Trade, the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario, Metrolinx, and most recently Anne Golden's Transit Investment Advisory Panel.

TAO has been writing about and advocating for new revenue tools since early 2010 – over four years.

In the summer of 2013, we joined forces with a number of other prominent non-government organizations, such as Evergreen City Works, Civic Action, Toronto Region Board of Trade, Toronto Atmospheric Fund, Pembina Institute, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, and Toronto Environmental Alliance to form the “Move the GTHA” collaborative, to coordinate and develop initiatives to improve the public and political climate for new revenue tools. Coordinated activities have included an open letter to GTHA elected officials, encouraging elected officials and citizens to sign the Civic Action pledge, presenting to the Anne Golden Panel, electronically educating and surveying 40,000 GTHA homes using Air Miles, analyzing the transit investment platforms of the three major provincial parties, conducting two virtual town halls, one with Premier Wynne on the topic, commissioning an Angus Reid poll, and producing ads and op-eds.

The work of the collaborative has been very rewarding, and progress is being made. On April 14, Premier Wynne announced the formation of a \$29 billion fund, over 10 years, to construct transportation infrastructure in the GTHA and the rest of the province. This will largely be funded by repurposing gas tax funds, and by borrowing. We await information in the upcoming budget on new revenue tools.

d. Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport Expansion.

TAO has considerable expertise in aviation planning, particularly aerodromes (airports). In general, we are not supportive of expansion of short-medium distance air service (< 1000 km), as that service can usually be better met by intercity rail.

In the summer of 2013, a project to expand BBTCA to allow jets was announced. TAO issued a position statement opposing this, and initiated contact with NoJetsTO, another non-government organization opposing the expansion.

We have subsequently issued 4 other reports on this subject, held press conferences and made deputations before Toronto City Council. Our most recent report, March 24, 2014, was a 70 page report dealing with the negative effects of potential future safety zones at the expanded airport. It caused a major media stir and provided solid input to Council as they voted to defer any approval of the expansion pending completion of definitive studies.

e. Railway Safety.

The rail tragedies at Lac Megantic and Ottawa Fallowfield, the release of the Transportation Safety Board report on VIA’s 2012 derailment in Burlington, and other serious rail incidents in Calgary, Plaster Rock, NB and Alberta have put rail safety in the public spotlight. Transport Action personnel were extremely busy responding to over 100 media inquiries. The media interest has not abated.

In April, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transportation began hearings on rail safety in Canada. Transport Action Canada’s David Jeanes testified by invitation.

3. OTHER PROJECTS

a. Future of the Gardiner Expressway (East of Jarvis).

After a two-year hiatus, the environmental assessment for this portion of the elevated expressway resumed in 2013. Three members of the TAO board sit on the stakeholder advisory committee. In March, we issued a statement supporting the “Remove” option. No decision by Toronto Council has been made on this project.

b. Proposed Pickering Airport.

After a hiatus of many years, this project was activated in 2013 when the Canadian gov-

ernment re-announced the project with a different land configuration. In February, TAO issued an updated position statement identifying six key reasons why we oppose this plan. TAO is in contact with Land over Landings, the most prominent non-government organization opposing this project.

c. New International Trade Crossing (Detroit – Windsor bridge).

In February, the Canadian government announced a plan to purchase land in Detroit to speed up building of this planned bridge. TAO has long opposed this bridge and highway project, formerly known as the Detroit River International Crossing, and issued a position paper opposing this latest initiative.

d. Shining Water Railway. TAO Board member Richard Crawford also sits on the board of the Shining Water Railway, which is making progress in restoring passenger rail service from Toronto to Peterborough and beyond by 2017. ■

Ontario provincial election - analysis of party platforms

The unexpected decision by the NDP to not support the government’s budget has led to an Ontario provincial election for June 12. The budget had contained numerous items that normally would have appealed to the centre-left NDP.

All three major parties have developed transportation platforms, with details to be revealed during the campaign. Due to the short time line to our publication deadline for this edition of “Ontario Report,” it was not possible to analyze the platforms.

However, we do have the benefit of a recent analysis by a sister organization, Pembina Institute. Pembina is a non-government organization with a sterling reputation for good analytical work. In March, as part of the *Move the GTHA* collaborative, which includes Transport Action Ontario, Pembina released an interim analysis of GTHA transit investment and expansion plans from Ontario’s major political parties. Although it does not analyze transportation aspects of the platforms pertaining to the balance of the province, it is helpful nevertheless.

Pembina’s report is available at www.pembina.org or at www.transport-action-ontario.com. The table below summarizes the analysis, with Green meaning “On Track for Transit”, Orange meaning “Some Forward Movement” and Black meaning “Stuck in Traffic.” A full rationale is available in the background document.

Pembina and the collaborative intend to update this analysis as more information is released by the parties. We will publish any updated ratings on our website. ■ – Peter Miasek

Greater Toronto-Hamilton transit investment and expansion	Liberal Party	NDP Party	PC Party
Rapid transit for the whole region	Green	Orange	Orange
New dollars for new transit	Orange	Orange	Black
Creating a dedicated fund for transit & transportation	Orange	Orange	Orange
Fast-tracking transit improvements	Orange	Orange	Black

U.S.A. rail news

Amtrak/states get new rolling stock for higher speed trains

Obama's presidency in the U.S. ushered in an era of passenger rail expansion through joint federal and state actions. With rising train ridership, and higher speed train projects, new rolling stock was needed for Amtrak and its expanding network of state-supported regional trains. In 2012, with funding from programs established by the Obama administration, the states of California, Illinois, Michigan and Missouri jointly ordered 130 bi-level coaches capable of 125 mph operation. The cars will be built by Sumitomo/Nippon Sharyo in Rochelle, IL for delivery between 2015 and 2018. These new cars cost \$352 million with an option for another 300.

The most recent news is that, as of March 4, 2014, the four state consortium mentioned above, plus the state of Washington, selected Siemens and Cummins to build 32 higher speed diesel locomotives capable of 125 mph operation for \$225 million, with an option for an additional 225. They will be built by Siemens in Sacramento, CA, with engines supplied by Cummins of Columbus, IN. Delivery will take place between 2016 and 2017.

Close to home, some of these locomotives and cars will be used for the fast train service that will shortly be implemented between Chicago and Detroit on track recently acquired by the state of Michigan. Higher speed trains inch closer to Canada, but sadly will not be here. ■

Higher speed and commuter rail move forward in Florida

All Aboard Florida. This is the name that the Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) has given its project to operate fast passenger trains between Miami and Orlando using its own capital resources. *Ontario Report* first wrote about the AAF Rapid Rail proposal in its May-June, 2012 issue. Opening date is set for 2016.

For background, recall that the Obama administration advanced a program of funding higher speed rail projects proposed by states. Florida's proposed starter high speed rail line (HSR) between Tampa and Orlando (85 miles) received \$2.4 billion in federal funding for the project. But in 2011, the newly elected govern-

nor, Rick Scott, rejected HSR, declining the \$2.4 billion grant. Two other newly elected Republican state governors also rejected federal rail funding. However, since these events, Scott has supported commuter rail expansion in his state and has not stood in the way of AAF.

FEC operates entirely within Florida between Jacksonville in the north, and Miami in the south (366 miles). Passenger train service ended in 1963. However, because of substantial freight traffic, FEC has built itself into a railway with high standards – centralized traffic control, adopting positive train control in 1987, and using heavy 133 lb/yard continuous welded rail, among other innovations. In 2007 the railroad was bought by Fortress Investment Group. Given the enormous level of tourism in Florida, FEC came to realize that, with a relatively modest further incremental investment, it could develop a substantial passenger train business. It chose to develop an express train service that would link Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, and Orlando. Quality track was in place, except for the last 40 miles between Cocoa (near Cape Canaveral) and Orlando.

FEC is moving quickly to start up its 16-daily hourly trains between Miami and Orlando. Because FEC is funding the project itself, and most of the rail infrastructure is already in place, it is not bogged down with extensive civil works and going through the bureaucratic hurdles that attend such undertakings. It doesn't need Gov. Scott's permission to do what railroads do.

It will be upgrading track and bridges where necessary, and especially upgrading road crossing protection. Three new stations will be built. FEC has reached agreement with the Orlando International Airport to enter its property, and the airport has obtain a \$215 million grant from the state of Florida, with Gov. Scott's blessing, to build an intermodal transportation station that will include AAF in its terminal area.

AAF has received widespread support in Florida, in particular for the economic development that it will spark. Florida has an extensive freeway system in place. With a three-hour travel time end-to-end, AAF will be very competitive with driving. It is estimated that 3 million car trips annually will be removed from highways as a result. The rapid rail will link Or-

lando, with its many tourist attractions, with West Palm Beach and to Ft. Lauderdale and Miami both important cruise ports. All four cities to be served have significant international airports. AAF hopes to attract residents of the state, business travelers, and in particular a portion of the 94 million tourists who visit Florida every year. Florida's population stands at 19.5 million.

Even with minimal draw on government resources (AAF claims a zero burden on taxpayers), the project has still run into nimbies along the Treasure Coast, roughly a 50 mile stretch of coast within the counties of Indian River, St. Lucie, and Martin. Opposition has centred on the increase in trains using the FEC line in this area that the AAF will bring, along with future growth in freight traffic. Train horn noise is of particular concern as is the increased closing time at some river bridges. While FEC is paying for upgrading road crossing protection, to get rid of horn blowing requires "quiet zones" which in turn require more expensive road crossing protection for which the FEC won't pay. FEC counters that it will help communities apply for the government grants that are available to establish quiet zones. Some Treasure Coasters also complain that there will be no local employment from the project and no trains will stop either. They complain that paying for quiet zones is a subsidy and that FEC promised the project would not need government handouts. They have also asked that FEC freights be moved to the CSX rail line which runs considerably to the west of the FEC. It is unlikely that these last-minute objections will stop the AAF project, but delays could result and the AAF has to spend resources on responding.

Some 40 miles of new track will be laid between Cocoa on the coast and the Orlando airport that will parallel the tolled Beachline Expressway (Hwy. 528). Use of the centre of this highway was ruled out, and instead the AAF will be built on the southern edge of the road. For \$12 million, the Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority was able to obtain an easement on a 200 ft. wide 22-mile long strip of land along the Expressway from a sole property owner, the Deseret Ranch, a 300,000 plus acres cattle ranch owned by the LDS Church. Construction of the new track will begin in 2015.

The oil industrialist, Henry Flagler, fell in love with Florida in the 1880s. He began to build hotels but realized that he needed a railroad to bring in customers. Starting in Jacksonville, the FEC reached Miami in 1896. The FEC reached Key West in 1912, though the viaduct to Key West was destroyed in a hurricane in 1935 (now a highway). Though the FEC has been out of the passenger business since 1963, it still has extensive land holdings and track is still in place into downtown Miami.

For the AAF trains, new stations will be built in Ft. Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. In downtown Miami a station will be built on vacant land next to the elevated Miami Metrorail rapid transit line. The track will come into this station on a viaduct. Renderings of the new glass station on the AAF website suggest that the station will be built just east of NW 1st Avenue between NW 2nd Street and NW 7th Street. The station would connect with Miami's elevated downtown circulator as well as the Orange Line of Metrorail. A 15 minute ride will take one from Government Centre to Miami Central Station, where the MIA [people] Mover will complete the ride into the airport terminal area. Miami Central Station is an intermodal terminal just east of MIA serving as the terminal station of Amtrak, the Tri-Rail commuter rail line to West Palm Beach on CSX track, Metrorail, Metrobuses, Greyhound, and the aforementioned airport people mover. Amtrak trains currently take from 6 to 8 hours to travel from Miami to/from Orlando.

A three-hour trip length is planned for the AAF. Between Miami and West Palm Beach, the top speed will be 79 mph, from there to Cocoa 110 mph, and on the new track 125 mph. For the 240 mile trip, the average speed works out to be 80 mph with two intermediate stops. While AAF claims it will require zero taxpayer funding, it will be drawing on a federal government program for financing. The project's original estimated cost was \$1 billion, but AAF will apply for a \$1.6 billion federal loan under the Federal Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing program of the Federal Railroad Administration.

Especially critical toward meeting the startup goal of 2016 will be rolling-stock procurement. In its 7-car formation, each bi-level train would have a diesel locomotive at each end, two business class cars seating 118, and three coaches seating 285 (total 403), with one business class diner/lounge/galley car, and a similar car

for coach passengers. Rolling stock is to be ordered this year.

It appears that AAF's rolling stock procurement is awaiting the finalizing of the project's financing. But one could also wonder if locomotives and cars can be delivered in time for a 2016 opening? On a three-hour schedule, with an hour lay-over, AAF's 16 hourly daily trains could be provided by 70 cars and 20 locomotives, allowing for two spare trains. AAF will likely draw on the basic design underlying the cars now being built for Amtrak and four other states by Sumitomo. Alstom, Kawasaki, Hyundai Rotem, and Bombardier are possible other builders. AAF may also be able to obtain Siemens/Cummins engines, though locomotive builders GE and Electromotive (Caterpillar) would likely also be available.

Very soon shovels will be in the ground for this great project. When running, Florida will be a model state of integrated multi-modal ground transportation. (Source: www.allaboardflorida.com)

April 30 start of SunRail commuter service in Orlando. The start of Florida's second commuter rail service was celebrated on April 30 in Orlando. Planning this commuter rail project began in 2007. Scheduled service commenced May 1, free for the first two weeks. This new commuter rail line uses a portion of the CSX "A-line" between Jacksonville, Orlando, and West Palm Beach. CSX required the three-county commuter rail agency to purchase 61 miles of its track between DeLand and Poinciana through Orlando for \$432 million. While CSX will run a few freights at night on this route, and Amtrak trains will still use it, most CSX freight trains have been shifted to its "S-line" west of Orlando, the more direct route for CSX freights from Jacksonville to West Palm Beach and on to Miami.

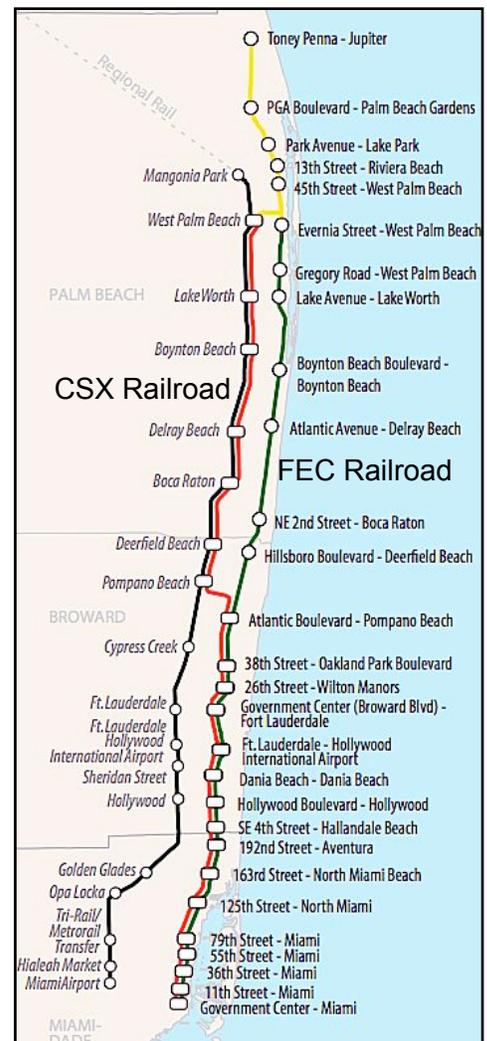
SunRail's Phase 1 route, which is 31 miles long, runs from Sand Lake Road south of the centre of Orlando, north to DeBary with a total of 12 stations, the full trip taking one hour. There will be 16 daily trips Monday through Friday, mostly concentrated in rush hours. Maximum train length is the locomotive and three GO-Transit style bi-level cars. Indeed, Bombardier has been contracted to operate and maintain the system. The cost of building the system totals \$650 million. There will be additional cost to extend the system by 2016 to its full length, which will add one more station in the north at DeLand, and four more to the south terminating at Poinciana. The Phase 1 ridership projection is 4,300 daily riders.

The Sand Lake station is located 2.5 miles west of the Orlando airport with a link into the airport being possible at some point in the future.

More commuter rail proposed for Miami. Florida's first commuter rail, known as Tri-Rail, opened in 1989 using CSX track from just east of MIA to West Palm Beach, a 61 miles route. It uses GO-Transit style coaches built by Bombardier. The impetus for its construction was anticipated rebuilding and widening of the nearby I-95 freeway and Florida Turnpike. Today, Tri-Rail carries 16,000 riders daily. Riders can change to Metrorail's Green at Metrorail Transfer (Hialeah), or to the Orange Line at Central Station (MIA) for a quick trip to downtown Miami.

The success of Tri-Rail has inspired the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority to consider using the FEC track for additional commuter service between Miami and West Palm Beach, track a bit

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Commuter rail for Miami region

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further east and parallel to the CSX alignment. Project development was formally announced in May, 2013, and was dubbed Tri-Rail Coastal Link. Envisaged is some Tri-Rail trains on the CSX route switching over to the FEC at a half-way point between Miami and West Palm Beach. An opening date of 2018 is suggested. No track usage agreement has been worked out as yet with FEC.

Relevant mandated studies of the Coastal Link are underway through the Florida Department of Transportation. The plan would involve numerous new stations. A document is now circulating that presents the benefits of bringing "transit-oriented development" (TOD) to existing Tri-Rail stations and to the new stations that would be on the Coastal Link. TOD seeks residential, office, and commercial densification around a transit hub. Aside from drawing existing commuters in the region from their cars and onto commuter rail, the many opportunities for TOD and their benefits are being emphasized as flowing from the commuter rail expansion. ■

Ottawa region news

Ottawa LRT Confederation

Line target opening 2018. Progress is being made by all three roadheaders digging the deep hard-rock tunnel under the city core. The night of February 20/21 the roadheader working under Waller Street at the University of Ottawa encountered a pocket of soft fill, causing a partial collapse into the tunnel and a sinkhole in the street above. This caused a tunneling delay of several months as the cause was investigated and remedial action taken. Fortunately solid rock was only a few meters away.

Elsewhere work is proceeding on widening the eastern part of the Queensway/417, as the new curb lanes will be used for buses to replace the bus Transitway for several years while it is converted to light rail. Property along Belfast Avenue east of Ottawa's VIA Station has been expropriated and structures demolished in preparation for the LRT maintenance and storage facility.

West of the core there has been much consternation by residents along Albert and Scott Streets that parallel the Transitway. With little consultation, the

contractor consortium Rideau Transit Group (RTG) planned to move all 2,500 buses per day off the western Transitway onto these two streets slightly widened, in many cases right next to homes, sidewalks, driveways and local streets. Following protests the city and contractor have been asked to consider alternatives to reduce the number of buses on Scott/Albert and use alternative routes such as the parkway along the Ottawa River. More details at www.confederationline.ca.

O-Train. Last fall, weekend service was terminated at Carleton Station in order that a parking garage could be built over the tracks at the north end of the campus. Work is slowly proceeding on completing the two passing tracks and enhanced signaling in order that four Citadis trains can provide 8 minute frequency, rather than the 15 minute frequency provided by two Talent trains. Training on the Citadis trains and switch-over is expected sometime this summer. The improved frequency and capacity should take some load off the buses, especially as some bus transitways are closed for conversion to LRT in the coming years.

Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam

Train. This line has been inactive since washouts in 2011 and some \$5 million is needed for repairs. Unless funds are identified by this August, operations are unlikely even for spring 2015.

Barrhaven VIA Level Crossings.

Last September there was a serious collision with fatalities between a double-decker OC-Transpo bus and Toronto-bound VIA train just outside Fallowfield Station. While the National Transportation Safety Board report has not yet been completed, the city has cut brush and trees near the crossing, reduced speed limits at the crossing, is installing flashing yellow lights and has emphasized the importance of stopping when crossing lights are on. With some debate, the city decided not to require all OC-Transpo buses to stop at all railway crossings. Research has shown that the risk/severity of accidents increases when buses stop and possibly stall at crossings.

The Barrhaven suburban area was developed from the 1970s onwards and surrounds the main Ottawa-Toronto VIA line, recently upgraded for higher speeds and double the number of trains. As a

result, there are half a dozen increasingly busy level crossings in the area. A bridge was planned for Woodroffe; however, hydrogeological conditions made bridges very expensive and signalled and gated level crossings were implemented instead.

In the last few months there have been a number of incidents in which various Barrhaven area signals have gone off and gates gone down, even though there were no trains nearby. Given last fall's tragic bus accident and traffic jams, there has been much criticism of VIA Rail. Accusations have flown between the city, VIA Rail, OC-Transpo and even the Hon. John Baird, the MP responsible for the area, has commented on a loss of faith in VIA for being unable to correct the problems. VIA has reported on various different causes, including soil conditions, salt on conductors and electronics, and wind blowing the crossing gates onto sensors.

On May 9 the Minister of Transport, Lisa Raitt, issued a six month directive requiring two flag men at each of the Woodroffe and Transitway crossings, and prohibited VIA from traversing five other crossings until the gates were confirmed to be down for at least five seconds. There are up to 14 VIA movements a day in the Barrhaven area.

CN Beachburg Subdivision

abandonment. This subdivision used to run from Ottawa to Pembroke, crossing the Ottawa River into Quebec and then back again. However there has been no freight traffic over this line for several years and over a year ago CN lifted the rails from Pembroke back to the bridge at Portage du Fort. By means of an injunction, municipalities in Quebec tried to stop CN from lifting the tracks through communities, but a judge ruled against them. It is probable CN will lift these rails, some of which are continuous welded rail, later in the summer. With conversion of the right-of-way to a recreation trail, it is unlikely this route will ever see commuter rail or freight service in the future.

Last summer CP completed its removal of rails between Smiths Falls, Pembroke, Deep River and Mattawa. Other than a spur to Arnprior, there will be no rail lines in the Upper Ottawa River Valley and thus all western CN and CP freight bound to/from Montreal must traverse Toronto. ■ - Bernie Geiger

Op-Ed Analysis

Another high-speed vote catcher

by Greg Gormick

You'd have a tough time finding anything worthwhile in the recent pie-in-the-sky promise by Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Minister of Transportation Glen Murray to give us a Toronto-Kitchener-London high-speed rail (HSR) service within a decade.

The plan was unveiled April 14 as part of the Liberals' pre-election vote catcher, known as Moving Ontario Forward. The whole basket of goodies is so overblown, light on details and high on rhetoric that it is suspect. But it's on the HSR promise that it truly implodes. Anyone who has been around the Canadian rail passenger block more than once will recognize this so-called "plan" as yet more political grandstanding conceived on the back of a cocktail napkin.

The specifics of the HSR component of the Grits' new transportation plan are few. Although it is allegedly based on a pre-feasibility study conducted by the consulting firm of Murray's latest transportation advisor du jour, the public can't see that study. Furthermore, the details seem to change every time they're discussed, especially when Murray engages in ill-advised Twittering on the subject. For example, it's now uncertain which portions of this dream line would be built from scratch and which ones would be on the existing alignment, where Murray presumes CN will be delighted to share its freight-heavy corridor with high-frequency electric HSR trains.

Perhaps most tellingly, the original promise that it would be done in a decade has vanished from the discussion. Instead, it is implied that Toronto-London HSR will evolve out of the other 10-year promise to electrify and increase GO's Toronto-Kitchener service (and every other existing GO route) to four departures hourly in each direction daily.

In the end, the whole HSR scheme is so riddled with flaws and so unlikely to happen it's not worth getting into the individual imperfections. But there is one interesting element in this plan that makes sense, although it's doubtful that Murray and his cohorts realize the depth

of the issue they've opened up. Since VIA already operates on the Toronto-London route, Murray reasons that the feds might like to take a financial stake in his super-train project.

Good idea, except it should be the other way around. The province should be instigating a partnership deal that brings them to the federal funding table. And it shouldn't be another HSR fantasy, but a rational and incremental plan using conventional technology to deliver improved service along the full length of VIA's North Main Line and throughout southwestern Ontario.

In fact, such a plan is gathering dust at VIA headquarters. Back when the Harper government first unveiled its program to pump \$923 million in much needed capital into VIA, there was a cost-effective project that could have been the first step in such an approach. It would have used rebuilt Budd RDCs to launch a six-roundtrips-daily Toronto-Kitchener-London service.

As I outlined in a previous column, that scheme was to be announced by VIA president Paul Côté in Kitchener in November 2009. But then VIA went off the rails. Côté was "retired" and replaced by Marc Laliberté, who took VIA on a self-destructive journey focused completely on the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle and eschewing long-haul trains and those serving markets of less than 100 miles, which were to be fobbed off on commuter operators or abandoned.

No one would ever suggest that a rail passenger service using rebuilt RDCs would be the final milestone in the improvement of southwestern Ontario's abysmal rail passenger system. But it could have been the first step on a pathway to a rolling program of improvements in equipment, infrastructure, running times and frequency on a line with traditionally high demand.

The plan still makes sense. So does Murray's suggestion that rail passenger service in this corridor could be improved jointly by the province and the feds. The failure to bring the provinces on board right at the beginning of VIA's sorry life remains one its principal flaws today and a threat for the future.

It is such cooperative funding agreements that have largely fuelled Amtrak's accelerating growth in recent years. Today, under the Obama administration's

Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, those partnerships are producing major improvements in the state-supported corridor program's fleet, infrastructure and service frequencies nationwide. The long-range objective is – surprise! – high-speed service in the future. So, the journey to HSR has begun in the U.S. In Canada, it has not.

VIA today is living by a slender thread. That's not going to change unless a train-friendly federal government gets installed in Ottawa or a whole new funding model involving the provinces is implemented. What will change nothing is yet another out-of-the-blue HSR dream scheme that diverts attention from the real need for better conventional service under a sustainable federal-provincial funding arrangement.

So, Minister Murray, should you be back after the June 12 provincial election, do yourself and Ontarians a great service by dropping your HSR fantasy and committing to a conventional, Amtrak-style rail improvement plan for this province. We don't need another HSR dream for tomorrow. We need something rational, affordable and doable today. Let's hope common sense – and budget limitations – prevail. ■ © 2014 by Greg Gormick

Toronto Island Airport decision on expansion for Porter's jets deferred

On Tuesday, April 1, 2014, Toronto city council unanimously voted to defer taking a decision on Porter Airline's plan for jets at the Toronto Island Airport. Over the past few months, more and more information has come to light showing negative impacts for Toronto's waterfront and harbour. TAO is proud of its role in providing key information about safety requirements for jet airports on waterfronts. TAO member Gordon Woodmansey's research as been exemplary. Given the approaching municipal election in October, and the many unanswered questions about impacts, council voted to put off a decision. A full-page ad in the *Toronto Star* by NoJets T.O., appearing on April 1, graphically shows how the expansion of the marine exclusion zones would take over the inner harbour, as well as listing other negative consequences. Readers can find the ad at www.nojetsto.ca. The TAO website, under the aviation tab, also provides our reports along with media releases. ■



Top photo: TAO President Peter Miasek presents Helga Jeanes (left) with a bouquet in recognition of her volunteer work for TAC and the National Office. Bottom photo: Tony Turriffin, TAC Secretary, presents David Jeanes (right) with a gift of appreciation for his years of service as President of Transport Action Canada. (Photos by David Leibold).

Joint AGM meetings of Transport Action Ontario and Transport Action Canada

On April 26, 2014, TAO and TAC held joint Annual General Meetings at Toronto's Metro Hall. TAO led off at 10am highlighted by the President's Report which is reprinted in the first pages of this newsletter. The executive officers and directors were re-elected. Peter Miasek as President noted that Dan Hammond has stepped down from the Board and thanked Dan for his service to TAO. Dan stepped down as he is a mayoral candidate in Oshawa's forthcoming municipal election.

The TAC AGM began at 11am, chaired by TAC president, David Jeanes. There were two key events at this meeting. The first was the Articles of Continuance. As there is a new federal non-profit corporations act in force, it is necessary for TAC to reincorporate under the new act. This requires the membership to adopt Articles of Continuance.

These were provided in advance of the meeting, and there was unanimous agreement of the members present to adopt these Articles.

The second event of the meeting was the retirement of David Jeanes as President after serving in that position for 12 years. David had given notice of stepping down a year ago, and Harry Gow has been elected in his place. David will still keep active in TAC continuing to help out with the National Office in Ottawa and as a public spokesperson. Both Helga and David Jeanes were presented with gifts of appreciation for their years of voluntary work on behalf of TAC.

Following lunch at 1:30pm, the public forum meeting began. David Jeanes jointly with Peter Miasek presented Paul Bedford with TAC's Orange Prize for 2013 in recognition of his efforts on behalf of sustainable public transit. Bedford served as Toronto's chief city planner from 1996 to 2004. The meeting then heard a short presentation from Michael Wolczyk of Metrolinx about the progress being made on the revitalization of Toronto's Union Station. After the talk, audience members went to Union Station for a short tour of its public areas. We are grateful to Metrolinx for its presentation and the tour.

Metrolinx's new glass gallery over part of the station's tracks is stunning and

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welcome for its light. The TTC is in the midst of adding a second platform to its subway station. Much of the construction at the station is still out of sight such as the new retail level that will provide pedestrian movement below the concourse level. Cost and time were added to the revitalization by the need to rebuild many of the supporting columns under the tracks. Union Station has 14 tracks. Metrolinx has bought the freight bypass tracks to the south to add an additional island platform for two more tracks. VIA has a right to six tracks. Metrolinx is proposing that VIA only needs three tracks, giving it 13 rather than the 8 tracks it now has. ■

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Join Transport Action to help us advocate for sustainable transportation. By joining Transport Action Ontario, you also become a member of Transport Action Canada. Members receive *Ontario Report*, as well as our national newsletter *TransportAction*.

To join, send your name, address, telephone number, email address (if any), and membership fee to our box address above. Our annual membership fees are: introductory (1st year only) \$20; regular \$35; senior \$30; student \$25; low income \$20; family \$50; non-profit affiliate \$75; business \$170. Transport Action Canada is a registered charity and donations to it receive a tax-credit receipt. Its website address is //www.transport-action.ca.

Board meetings: first Thursday of the month except in May and July, in downtown Toronto. If you wish to participate, please contact Peter Miasek at 905.477.8636 or by email at peter.miasek@rogers.com to confirm as date, time and location may change.