



# TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

(formerly Transport 2000 Ontario)

*Advocating for Sustainable Public and Freight Transportation*  
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## TAO RESPONSE TO "TRACKING A TURNAROUND"

A Globe and Mail Interview with Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, Via Rail Canada CEO December 24  
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Mr. Desjardins-Siciliano is the newest manager of the crown corporation whose job is to put a positive face on declining support for passenger rail by our federal government. His claim that "...the government of Canada through taxpayers' money has done enough" does not stand up on close examination.

Here are Transport Action Ontario's (TAO) rebuttals to points made by VIA's CEO: (TAO has paraphrased some of his remarks)

- Mr. D-S: VIA needs its own tracks in the corridor between Ottawa and Toronto and the best way to build it is with private money for this "...huge business opportunity for the private sector..." with its large population and over thirty universities.  
TAO: If a dedicated track is profitable, why should not VIA (with appropriate government funding) build it and reap the financial rewards that would help subsidize its less profitable routes? Why should our government give away profitable business opportunities and leave only the unprofitable for subsidy? Cross-subsidization is common in all transportation systems. Passenger rail, whether high speed or regular produces many social, business and economic benefits, but is rarely financially profitable.
- Mr. D.S: Does not see the need for high speed rail in the (Toronto/Ottawa/Montreal) corridor at this time. HSR only goes from points that are at least 560 km apart.  
TAO: That certainly would be news to among others, the South Koreans, whose HSR is 305 km, and the Taiwanese whose main island is only 394 km long and whose HSR runs almost the length of the island. Both provide stops at cities in those corridors.
- Mr. D-S: Since half the business of VIA Rail is people in the Toronto/Ottawa/ Montreal corridor whose origins and destinations are in between those cities, a high-speed train would be of no use to those people.

TAO: All or at least most express service (such as high-speed rail) is balanced by local service. A high or higher-speed train can whip business travellers efficiently between cities in the corridor, take traffic off the roads and reduce the need for highly polluting short-distance air travel. Local service should of course, remain in place. Mating the two would deliver economic and environmental benefits.

- Mr. D-S: Referring to VIA Rail. "...the government of Canada through taxpayers' money has done enough."

TAO: According to Transport Canada statistics, road expenditures doubled in the seven years between 2002/03 to 2009/10. In 2010/11 the total subsidy to roads from all levels of government was \$13.44 billion (\$28.97 billion in expenses less \$15.53 billion in revenues). By comparison, VIA Rail received \$260.9 million in operating funding for the year 2011. It received capital funding in the years 2007, 2009, and 2012 for a total of \$983 million. The taxpayers of Canada are generously supporting roads, the unsustainable transportation mode and underfunding and shrinking passenger rail, the sustainable mode.

- Mr. D-S: "The reduction in [Via Rail] services was to recognize where there is no market there is no point in having a service."

TAO: Mr. D-S has it backwards. Reduce service and you drive customers away. Reduced ridership then becomes an excuse for reducing service, and on it goes. Build it and they will come. Don't build it and they will go elsewhere, which is exactly what our federal government wants.

*For the original interview, Google: Tracking a Turnaround Globe Atkins.*