



# Ontario Report

## Transport Action Ontario



Metrolinx's Union-Pearson Express opened on June 6. On Sunday, June 14, the public was invited to ride UPX and partake in a BBQ lunch at the Bloor and Weston stops. Photo: Dan Hammond.

### Op-Ed Analysis

## VIA on the election trail

by Greg Gormick

There's good news and bad news. The good news is that VIA is engaged in a public relations campaign that has earned it considerable ink across eastern Canada. The bad news is that the plans being unfurled are only causing even more concern than usual about VIA's fate.

Following Yves Desjardins-Siciliano's appointment to VIA's helm in May 2014, he hit the rubber chicken circuit to talk about the railway's future. His opening salvo was that his political masters had supplied enough money to VIA and it would be "unfair" to expect more. For good measure, the freshly-minted railway baron added, "VIA Rail is an increasing burden on Canada's taxpayers due to deteriorating on-time performance and the lack of frequencies to be relevant."

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### FROM THE PRESIDENT - PETER MIASEK

#### Good progress on Greater Golden Horseshoe transit projects continues



I last wrote about Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) transit last October, shortly after the provincial and municipal elections were over.

The election of a transit-friendly provincial government and several transit-friendly mayors boded well for the future, all-be-it with some ill-advised campaign promises and some potential future hiccups.

Since then, progress towards improved transit has continued. While a large number of rapid transit projects are under study, such as the Downtown Relief Line, the Yonge Subway extension, and the 407 Transitway, this is not

a good measure of progress, as it is easy for government to commit to studies due to their relatively low cost. It is much more significant to measure construction progress and to count projects where funding has been committed.

Construction is complete on the Union Pearson Express DMU project and Toronto now has a rapid transit connection to Pearson Airport. While there are legitimate concerns about some aspects, such as fares, stations

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#### Sault Ste.Marie - Hearst train last run July 15 An editorial

After a long community fight to save the Algoma Central three-times a week service on the remote rail route between Sault Ste.Marie and Hearst (476km/296mi), this train is no more, with a last run on July 15. The saga began with the January 2014 announcement by the feds that it was cutting its annual \$2.2 million grant that kept this train operating year-around. The government originally claimed that the

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

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and integration with GO Rail, nevertheless this project helps move the region forward. GO also completed work on the new York Concourse at Union Station, and both GO and TTC continue work on other improvements to Union Station. Finally, the Presto card is seeing a rapid growth in usage and will be fully employed by all transit agencies in the region, including TTC, by end 2016.

Heavy construction continues on the Eglinton LRT (tunneling) and a contractor has been selected for the stations and the at-grade portions. Also, construction of additional segments of VIVA BRT and the Mississauga Transitway continues. The Spadina Subway extension to Vaughan is also moving towards completion, although it is significantly behind schedule and also over budget. And construction work continues on Waterloo's ION LRT and adapted BRT project, with a completion date of 2017.

Bottom Line: lots of construction on major projects underway.

Regarding future committed projects, the 2015 Provincial Budget, and subsequent announcements, committed \$13.5B for Regional Express Rail (RER), \$1.6B for Hurontario-Main LRT in Mississauga and Brampton, and \$1.0B for Hamilton LRT. Additionally, the province confirmed previously-announced funding for the Finch West LRT (\$1.2B). These announcements add a lot of badly-needed clarity to the future transit network.

Work is underway on many aspects of RER. Various corridor improvement projects (double tracking, grade separations) and various system-wide projects such as electrification, signalling, train control systems and the Whitby Maintenance Facility are either under construction, in the tendering process, or under Environmental Assessment.

It was significant that the Province committed to 100% funding of the Hurontario-Main and Hamilton projects.

This contrasts with the Waterloo LRT project, where the feds and the municipality each picked up about 30%. The Hurontario announcement was very welcome in Mississauga, where council had expressed misgivings that the City would be able to contribute funds to the project. The Brampton end of the project remains in some doubt, as there is a pitched battle in Brampton about the best route through or around the heritage area on Main Street. Transport Action Ontario has published a letter of support for the Main Street route, as per the technical recommendations by Metrolinx and City staff.

The Hamilton announcement was also welcome as Minister Del Duca specifically mentioned the funding was for LRT with an "L." There had been a lot of debate in Hamilton on the merits of LRT versus BRT, despite a Metrolinx business case showing that LRT was superior, and the Mayor-elect had indicated he wanted to "hit the reset button." Hopefully, the Provincial announcement will put an end to the debate and implementation can promptly begin.

The confirmation of funding and the commencement of procurement for the Finch West LRT was also very welcome. A small group of local residents and the local councillors had stirred up opposition to the LRT, pushing for a subway instead. There had been concern last fall that the Province was getting cold feet due to this noise.

The only fly in the ointment in the Provincial announcements is the deferral of the Sheppard East LRT to after 2020, when the Finch project is complete. Whether this is the result of cold feet arising from local opposition similar to Finch, or whether it is a cash-flow/funding issue is not clear at this time.

There is still one area where much more clarity is needed. This is the relationship between Eglinton LRT, RER, Mayor Tory's SmartTrack proposal, and the city-approved Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE). The SSE was originally intended to run under McGowan

Road and was estimated to cost \$3.6B (escalated costs). With provincial funding and federal funding capped at \$2.0B and 0.66B respectively, the balance and any overruns need to be funded by the City. A property tax increase and development charges were approved by the City for its portion. However, achieving sufficient ridership to justify a subway on this extension, which was extremely doubtful to begin with, is now even more questionable with the planned Stouffville RER line 2 km to the west. As a result, other route alternatives running further east are being scoped, all of which would add to the City's costs for this ill-advised project.

TAO continues to advocate for a GO spur line, which could be called "Smart Spur," from the Stouffville RER line to Scarborough Town Centre and beyond. Although some transit experts have endorsed this idea, it remains beyond the scope of the current SSE studies.

The relationship between RER, Eglinton LRT, and SmartTrack is also very complex. Essentially SmartTrack would largely run on two RER corridors, but have more stations, higher train frequencies and TTC fares (i.e. lower fares than GO). Another portion of SmartTrack would set off on its own corridor on Eglinton West, right where the Eglinton LRT Phase 2 is slated. Recently, the Federal government committed \$2.6B from the planned Public Transit Fund towards SmartTrack. There is clearly a lot of overlap between SmartTrack and other projects. It is hoped that a reconciliation of these various projects can be promptly achieved, and that the federal money can be redirected to an optimized project.

In conclusion, despite a few bumps in the road, there is an amazing amount of construction and pre-construction work underway for transit in the GGH. Elected officials at all three levels of government finally seem to understand that GGH mobility is at a crisis and that public transit is the prime solution. ■

## VIA on the election trail

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Given the depths of VIA's accumulated woes and the fact that a solution is going to require steady capital funding to get it out of its deep pit, this rings alarm bells. This is even more the case when it's put in the context of the capital funding supplied by this government since 2007.

Now totaling well over \$1 billion (the government and VIA won't tell you exactly), VIA's capital infusion was, at best, poorly applied and, at worst, more money down a rat hole. Any realistic appraisal would have demonstrated that catching up with VIA's deferred capital investment was going to cost much more than \$1 billion. What's more, the projects selected were largely questionable expenditures that couldn't possibly supply the ridership, revenue and cost recovery up-ticks promised by VIA and expected by government.

The litany of botched elements in the VIA capital plan has been dealt with previously, so there's no need to review that lengthy and depressing list. Suffice it to say this wasn't the silver bullet to cure VIA's multiple ills.

Now, VIA's honchos are talking about major works that would make the previous ones pale by comparison. But does anyone connected with these plans have even the faintest idea of the realities of passenger railroading? Given the absence of relevant experience on the politically-appointed VIA board and management team, it's not difficult to supply an answer.

The focal point of the current plan is a new, dedicated line that VIA says the private sector will build for it in the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle. The scant details VIA has released were questioned in a previous column, so there's no need to re-plough that field. But the additional information spritzing out of VIA's leaky boat might lead you to ask if anyone at VIA head office has even seen the territory the line would traverse.

This latest plan would continue to use the VIA-owned lines from just north of Coteau to Ottawa and then on to Smiths Falls. From there, it would snuggle up to the CP freight main line to Glen Tay and then veer off on the abandoned portion of the CP Havelock Subdivision. The 92 missing miles would be rebuilt

and the dedicated tracks would continue on the CP right-of-way through Peterborough to Leaside, then down GO's mothballed, ex-CP Don Branch to Union Station.

What about all those high-ridership towns currently served by VIA on the CN Kingston Sub, on which a previous VIA scheme invested more than \$400 million? Would there be enough business generated on the dedicated route through Peterborough to cover the losses on the existing routes? Has CP been consulted? Silence rings out from VIA.

As for new equipment, that would come after the private sector ponies up the \$3 billion for the line because, at 110 mph, these would have to be very specialized trains that would need to fit with the infrastructure. Do these people think we just fell off the turnip wagon yesterday?

If this isn't enough to convince you that VIA is a torpedoed ship taking on water fast as it ploughs through rough seas, then recent announcements in Southwestern Ontario will. With all the public angst from there, it is little surprise that VIA has aimed its public relations apparatus that-a-way. The result was more speaking engagements for the VIA brass.

At a June 16 Stratford Chamber of Commerce luncheon, a smorgasbord of promises was served. A new Stratford-Toronto morning train, an additional Toronto-Sarnia roundtrip, shifting the Sarnia trains to the Brantford line and a series of RDC shuttles from London to Windsor and Sarnia; all were on the menu VIA dished up and then re-warmed in Sarnia the next day.

Have negotiations for the new trains occurred with CN, GO and the Goderich-Exeter Railway, over which these trains will run? No. Have these proposed frequencies been put through a business case analysis? No. Is there enough equipment to do this? Maybe.

What was supposed to soothe listeners was the repetition of the VIA CEO's view that he had in mind an admittedly unscientific threshold of 120 passengers per train to cover operating costs and make these trains permanent entries in the VIA timetable. He also told listeners he expects the communities to drum up the required business or the "use it or lose it" rule will be applied. As one of the mayors commented, he wasn't

aware that one of his unpaid jobs was acting as the VIA marketing department.

Many politicians and citizens aren't buying this load of old cods. For every feel-good statement from VIA, there were angry comments about these being just loosey-goosey promises made in an election year by a gang appointed by the current government. That all the improvements would occur after the election – "maybe by the end of the year, probably early next year, definitely by the end of 2016" – raised more than a few eye brows at the VIA promotional sessions. It struck some as just election-eering on VIA's publicly-funded tab.

Still, the potential to end the politically-driven madness we've seen at VIA for 38 years may be just down the track: Election Day. VIA's woes are penetrating the public consciousness and becoming a fertile campaign issue in some parts of Canada. No matter who the winners are on October 19, we can only hope they will finally treat VIA intelligently and compassionately. But then, hope springs eternal, doesn't it? ■

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UPX station in downtown Toronto showing platform doors. Photo: Dan Hammond.

## Sault - Hearst train cut

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area was served by roads and was not remote. This proved untrue. The action was simply budget cutting. Low ridership was pointed out, but that's the case with all remote rail services across Canada. VIA has also had its budget cut with the loss of key trains in its system as of late 2011.

Community efforts to keep this train did result in the federal government offering a partial return of funding, and demanding a private operator. There would be \$5.3 million over three-years, with the private operator to become revenue self-sufficient operating both the Agawa Canyon tour train and the Sault-Hearst train. A tendering by CN, the owner of the Algoma Central, resulted in the selection of the US-based firm Railmark. Railmark offered an upgraded tourist experience drawing on its previous involvement with dinner trains.

Railmark was operating the Algoma trains while a contract was to be worked out between Railmark and the City of Sault Ste Marie. The negotiations have not been successful. Railmark did not have the financial resources it claimed, and its operation of the Sault-Hearst train turned into a shamble. With Railmark unable to meet the full terms of offered agreement, its operations have now terminated. CN will run the Agawa tour train this season, but will not run the Sault-Hearst train as it regards Transport Canada's subsidy as inadequate and does not want to run passenger service.

The ACR stakeholders working group is retendering, but this could not be done in time to save this year's tourist season. It appears that CN and Transport Canada did not have a Plan B in case the contractor defaulted. A certificate of fitness was issued to Railmark by Transport Canada as required, but no such certification was given to a runner-up. When Railmark was certified, it was not clear that financing was in place. This proved not to be the case. Furthermore, Railmark was certified when it had no engineer employees. It appears to have run

short of the absolute minimum of four experienced engineers that the tri-weekly 9.5 hour run requires.

Since Railmark took over the Sault-Hearst train, riding it has been a nightmare. The schedule was not kept. The train from Hearst was terminated half-way at Hawk Jct. and passengers put on a bus to the Sault using a highway many kilometers away from the rail line south of Hawk Jct. One is left wondering about whether or not due diligence was done in issuing a certificate of fitness when financing was missing, there was no staff, and the operator had a spotty record of tourist operations. Me thinks local guy/gals could do way better, eh. This is actually a serious business, as the lives of travelers and dependent businesses are significantly disrupted when promised services are not delivered as advertised. It shows shoddy treatment of the Algoma by CN and the feds. ■

## TAO Board of Directors

### April 25 TAO Annual Meeting

Transport Action Ontario's AGM was held at Toronto's City Hall facility at the end of April. Two directors-at-large stepped down - Ed Levy and Bob Myndiuk. Ed is a well-known retired transportation planner, and Bob is an authority on light rail developments around the world. Peter Miasek, our President, thanked both Ed and Bob for the years of service and for their valuable contributions to TAO's advocacy. Dan Hammond returned to the board after leaving to run for office in Oshawa in the last municipal elections, and Scott St. John of London, Ontario was added. All officers were continued including Peter Miasek, President (Markham), Tony Turrittin, Vice-President, Anthony Rubin, Treasurer, Bruce Budd, Secretary, and Natalie Litwin, Immediate Past President. The remaining directors are Roger Brook, Richard Crawford (Lakefield), Howard Levine, Avrum Regenstreif, Linda Savory-Gordon (Sault Ste. Marie), and Ken Westcar (Woodstock). ■

## Meet board member Linda Savory-Gordon



Linda Savory-Gordon joined the TAO board in September of 2014. We welcome Linda, who is also a board member of the Coalition for Algoma Passenger

Trains (CAPT), and one of its most active volunteers. Linda has just retired as a professor of social work at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie.

Linda grew up in Toronto, obtained a BA from Queen's University, MSW degree from McGill, and PhD from Bristol in the UK. She was employed in social work at medical facilities in Montreal and Toronto before moving to the Sault in 1988 to take up an academic position at Algoma. Her specialties include public policy and community economic and social development. Linda works with Algoma's NORDIK Institute which partners with municipalities, First Nations, and community organizations in northern Ontario offering First Nations, community organizations, and municipalities development community-based research support. CAPT has worked closely with the Institute in developing its community outreach.

CAPT began in 2006 as a community organization to support and promote passenger and freight rail in northern Ontario. It saw the region's rail network as offering a return of passenger trains that would support both local tourism, now key to the area's economy, as well as providing much needed basic transportation. It turned out that this rail network was seriously under threat from a number of directions. CAPT has also taken the lead in founding the Northern and Eastern Ontario Rail Network (NEORN), a network of rail advocacy groups across Northern Ontario under the umbrella of TAO.

CAPT supported efforts to obtain

grants to upgrade the Huron Central Railway, opposed the abandonment of CP's Ottawa Valley line, opposed the Liberal's elimination of the ONR's *Northlander* passenger train, and most recently worked to save the Sault-Hearst train service on the Algoma Central (CN Rail) when the Harper Conservative government pulled Algoma Central passenger train funding. A coalition of cities and towns, First Nations, and CAPT did succeed in obtaining an entirely inadequate half-way measure of financial support from the feds for the Algoma trains for the next three years. However, this reprieve is still not out of the woods, as Railmark Holdings, awarded the operating concession, is not currently providing the services it said it would provide. TAO supports Linda's transportation advocacy, CAPT's efforts, and the ACR Stakeholders' efforts to obtain an equitable agreement to keep the Sault-Hearst trains running in this difficult situation. ■

## Ed Levy speaks out on Toronto transit planning



After he retired as a transportation planner and president of BA Consulting Group of Toronto, Ed Levy joined our board. Stepping down from the board is yet another retire-

ment. But Ed's not retiring from his commitment to being a leading critic of the transit planning mess in the GTA.

Ed knows whereof he speaks. In 2013, Neptis Foundation published his *Rapid Transit in Toronto: A Century of Plans, Progress, Politics and Paralysis* as a webbook. This year, BA Group has prepared a beautifully printed edition of Ed's comprehensive study. If anything, the two years since the webbook appeared have shown continuing missteps in moving Toronto's rapid transit visions forward.

Ed is not shy about what's going wrong. Let's consider briefly some concerns he has recently expressed.

In July, 2013, Toronto City Council voted to replace the Scarborough RT upgrade to LRT by a subway extension starting at Kennedy Station on the Bloor-Danforth line adding three stops on McCowan Road ending at Sheppard Avenue East. In April 2014, the Liberals at Queen's Park announced Regional Express Rail (RER), converting GO commuter rail lines into electrified regional rail with frequent all-day two-way service. With the election of John Tory as mayor of Toronto in October 2014, Tory pursued his Smart-Track rapid transit plan, a surface subway-like service to be operated by the TTC running along the Stouffville GO line, through Union Station, and west along GO's Georgetown line to Mt. Dennis where SmartTrack would veer west onto Eglinton Avenue to the Airport Corporate Centre. Sidelined in all this planning is the Downtown Relief subway line (DRL) proposal of long ago, though this is now being studied again by the City and TTC starting in May 2014.

The Bloor/Yonge subway station has long suffered congestion caused by TTC riders from both the east and the west on the Bloor-Danforth line transferring to both branches of the Yonge-University line to continue downtown. Overall subway ridership continues to grow, and Richmond Hill wants the Yonge line extended north to Highway 7. What is desperately needed before that is allowed to happen is the relief subway which would interchange with the Bloor-Danforth subway east of the Don River Valley, thereby creating a new route from the east into Toronto's downtown at its lower end. That would be a bona fide "network-builder," setting the stage for dissipating most of the chronically congested sections of the existing subway system, in particular the Bloor/Yonge and St. George interchanges. In consequence, the commonly used term for this new line, the DOWNTOWN Relief Line, Levy holds, needs to be replaced in recognition of its greater role as a veritable REGIONAL Relief Line (RRL). Levy

has long advocated this addition to the system and strongly believes it should cross the Bloor-Danforth subway near Pape, providing for an extension north to Thorncliffe Park, Flemingdon Park, and Don Mills.

Ed has also advocated two GO Transit/TTC subway interchanges located east and west of Union Station, where proportions of GO ridership on all GO Transit (RER) lines could begin/end their journeys at central area RRL stations other than Union Station itself. Therefore, the RRL could "relieve" not only the existing subway system but also Union Station which is at present the sole central area access gateway for the entire regional rail system. This is no small consideration in view of undoubted prospects for recurring capacity problems at Union Station beyond 2031.

But what is being planned, or perhaps better stated, what has unravelled?

First, the mayor's SmartTrack has been promised support by the Province, and more recently by the Federal government. But what is it? It either duplicates or displaces RER because Mayor Tory conveniently placed it on already existing GO Transit rights-of-way. If it is to be like a "subway," how does that fit in with GO trains present or future, and won't Union Station be overloaded by taking away two tracks and devoting them to TTC riders? Worse, SmartTrack, with its extremities located far to the northeast and northwest of the central north-south corridor, would be unlikely to divert riders from the older sections of the existing subway system.

Still worse, SmartTrack would actually make the Scarborough subway extension unnecessary (if it ever was necessary). So now the City is busy restudying the Scarborough subway extension looking at alternative routes. But the further east it is built — a Bellamy Road alignment is one of the latest suggestions — the lower the density and the lower the ridership undermining the reason subways are built. And, in any case, any extension of the Bloor-Danforth subway will add more riders who, in the

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**Levy on Toronto transit planning**

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absence of the RRL, would likely keep riding all the way to the Bloor/Yonge and St. George interchanges, the worst choke-points on the entire system.

Of particular concern to Levy is the priority of the various projects presently under consideration. Right now SmartTrack and the Scarborough subway extension trump DRL/RRL, which means DRL/RRL does not get built for decades, in turn perpetuating our incomplete and in many respects dysfunctional system.

Building vanity rapid transit has the consequence of continuing transportation misery for everyone. For Levy, a rapid transit network providing multiple paths into and out of Toronto's core area is needed not only to draw people to using transit, but for relieving the road system because more people will choose to ride transit.

Perhaps the most glaring flaw in the planning of Toronto's high capacity public transit facilities (the subway) was the treatment of the downtown itself. The primary origins and destinations of peak period journeys has always been, and will remain, the city's historic commercial and multi-use downtown core, the financial district and its immediate environs. During the late 1950s the decision was made to proceed initially with the Bloor-Danforth subway rather than the Queen Street subway (the "ancestor" of the RRL) which was first proposed as long ago as 1909! This essentially forced the major component of Toronto's subway ridership to transfer at one of the two underdesigned interchanges referred to earlier – Bloor/Yonge and St. George.

(Note: A novel "integrated" operation allowing for direct no transfer service between each of the then-three extremities of the basic system (Yonge north, and Bloor-Danforth east and west) and the downtown Yonge-University loop was scratched after the first six months of Bloor-Danforth service in 1966. In fact, the TTC had never been in favour of the integrated service be-

cause of its complexity and variations in headways on the two lines, and the signal system at the multi-level Avenue Road/Bloor wye that created lengthy delays on all three branches. Following the separation of the two principal lines, this left the lower platform level of Bay station without revenue service but, more significantly, immediately led to the severe congestion problems — particularly at Bloor/Yonge — which continue to plague us today.)

Interestingly, Levy points out that Midtown Toronto, centred on Bloor Street between Avenue Road and Church Street, in spite of its impressive and ongoing intensification, has never become a concentrated employment centre even remotely comparable, in terms of sheer numbers, to the financial district and likely never will. To make the situation even more difficult for transit users, the financial district and neighbouring precincts continue to grow and diversify as employment districts. Adding in the region's large-scale entertainment and recreational venues and its rapidly growing residential population living in condos, this part of Toronto is taking on the semblance of a smaller version of bustling central Manhattan.

The sad fact is that Toronto, North America's fourth-largest municipality, does not have an efficient high-capacity transit NETWORK offering either route choice (essential redundancy) allowing for the effective bypassing of service disruptions, or multiple, well-distributed interchanges between subway lines and with the GO Transit system as a whole. Plans and visions abound; implementation is excruciatingly slow and minimal as growth continues apace on many fronts. The wasted opportunities at (potential) strategically located multi-route mobility hubs such as Bloor West/Dundas West, Kennedy/Eglinton East, and Mount Dennis (Eglinton Crosstown LRT/GO Transit/UPX) are particular cases-in-point. So far, interjurisdictional coordination, fare integration and other examples of consolidation remain but a dreamscape littered with procedural and political stumbling blocks.

Levy's bottom line: the relief subway line (RRL) east of the Don River is es-

sential, the Scarborough subway extension is indefensible (at least in the short term) and its capital costs would be far better used to accelerate construction of the RRL. SmartTrack duplicates GO and so might just as well be achieved with early electrification of GO on its Stouffville corridor. SmartTrack on the west side of Toronto — well this could be studied for a while longer, with the currently unfunded second phase of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT to Pearson Airport via the Airport Corporate Centre as a viable alternative "waiting in the wings."

Do you want Ed's views first hand? Just give him a call or invite him to lunch. Thanks Ed for "keeping it real." ■

—Tony Turriffin

**Technology**

**Trolleybus fleet renewal for Seattle and San Francisco**

Few trolleybus (TB) systems remain in North America, but Vancouver, Seattle, and San Francisco still have large TB systems, with small systems in Boston, Philadelphia, and Dayton, Ohio. In 2013 Seattle decided to replace its TB fleet with the latest 40-foot and 60-foot articulated Xcelsior TBs from New Flyer Industries of Winnipeg, North America's largest transit bus builder. The joint purchase by these cities is for 86 40ft TBs for Seattle, and 115 articulated 60ft TBs, 55 for Seattle and 60 for San Francisco. Vancouver modernized its TB fleet starting in 2005 with New Flyer 40ft and 60ft coaches. These buses were entirely low-floor and had battery power allowing travel off-wire for short distances.

In 2008, New Flyer introduced its low-floor Xcelsior bus platform that provided for three sizes of transit vehicle, 35-foot, 40-foot, and a 60-foot articulated model, any of these models able to accommodate either a diesel, CNG, hybrid, or trolley propulsion system. A fast-charging battery-electric Xcelsior bus is currently being tested. The Xcelsior model cuts weight by 8%



San Francisco receives latest New Flyer articulated trolley bus. Photo courtesy New Flyer Industries.

compared to previous models with a corresponding 8% fuel saving. Less weight means less tire wear. The Xcelsior uses disk brakes, easier and less expensive to maintain. The TB bus has the added advantage of regenerative braking returning electrical energy to the power supply. Computer electronics monitor propulsion and other on-board systems that aid maintenance and also provide information that can aid driver performance.

Trolleybuses operate superbly on hilly streets which characterize both Seattle and San Francisco. They accelerate well even fully loaded. They are appreciated for their quietness - no roar of an engine upon acceleration or on steep grades. Transit experts have noted the "spark effect." The presence of a streetcar or trolleybus line attracts greater patronage than if it were diesel bus operated. The abandonment of trolleybuses has often drawn public protest. Proposals to extend or create a TB line inevitably draws complaints about overhead wires.

Quieter and more popular, TBs are also zero-emission where electricity is generated by hydro, and have both lower operating and maintenance costs compared to diesel buses. Power distribution, once wires are put up and power substations built, has relatively low maintenance cost. Capital cost of a TB is about twice the cost of a diesel bus of the same size, but the life of a TB is at least twice that of a typical diesel transit bus. In Vancouver, its Brill TBs lasted 34

years, and the 900-series Flyers lasted 26 years. With no refuelling necessary, TBs can be kept in service for hours longer than fossil fuel-powered buses. It cannot be denied that the cost of electrical infrastructure is a barrier to new TB installations. Transit managers often exaggerate the benefits of the flexibility of diesel buses while at the same time not seeing the costs of new suburban bus barns requiring long dead-heading trips to and from such facilities.

Toronto had 10 TB routes between 1947 and 1993. It rebuilt its TBs in 1970 with new bus bodies and recycled electric propulsion. But management turned against TBs and let the overhead wires run down. In 1991 management proposed abandonment. A citizen movement obtained a reprieve for two TB lines in 1992 with Provincial government aid, but a financial crunch resulted in withdrawal of that aid and no possible support for new TBs and wire upgrading. In the meantime, TTC management proposed natural gas-fueled buses as a "cleaner" option. In 1993 the last two TB routes were closed, and CNG buses arrived. These buses were found to be expensive to operate and maintain, and were quickly replaced. CNG proved to be hard on bus motors and CNG storage tanks subject to corrosion. One cost of CNG buses not often mentioned relates to their fuelling system. CNG is stored in on-board tanks at high pressure; there are significant electricity costs to pump CNG up to the pressures needed to store enough fuel to keep CNG buses on the road. Toronto could relatively inexpensively retrieve its TB system as many electrical substations already exists to serve Toronto's subways and streetcars. ■

## St. Marys, Ontario

### Save VIA Rally Thursday, July 30, 2015

#### New North Main Line plan to be unveiled

...from the press release

To build upon Save VIA Phase 3 – the "voting phase" – we will be staging a number of events, all on Thursday, July 30 and all in St. Marys, ON. It is our fondest hope that you can join us for one or more or all of the events confirmed.

#### 8 am-9 am: St. Marys VIA Station

Complimentary coffee/tea/Timbitts, chat with Greg Gormick and other members of the Save VIA team, and Ken Westcar of Transport Action Ontario (TAO), as well as an opportunity to join our sign rally. Carry one of our signs or make and carry your own!

#### 10 am-1130 am: Bank of Nova Scotia (outdoor alcove)

Preview of Save VIA's short-term action plan, *The North Main Line Reborn*, for improved VIA service to St. Marys.

#### 12:45 pm-1:45 pm: St. Marys VIA Station

BBQ by donation with the proceeds to Save VIA. Official release of *The North Main Line Reborn* action plan.

#### 2:30 pm -3:30 pm: Baristas Water Street South

Chat with Save VIA and TAO team members about *The North Main Line Reborn* action plan and the future of VIA service to and from St. Marys.

#### 8 pm- 9 pm: St. Marys VIA Station

Chat with the Save VIA team and local election candidates, view Greg Gormick's collection of international rail travel posters, join our second sign rally of the day and watch Greg escape from the chains imposed on him by the feds.

All aboard!

Chris West,  
Save VIA  
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St.Marys, ON, N4X 1B7 (519-284-3310)



Interior of Sumitomo-built DMUa for UP Express service; free rides, June 14, 2015. Photo: Dan Hammond.

## TAO Activities/Events

### Safety issues to consider in the proposal to expand Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport

The Greater Waterfront Coalition, of which Transport Action Ontario is an active member, has released a 30-page report, together with photos and illustrations, on 11 safety issues associated with the proposal to expand Toronto Island airport. The report calls for independent expert study of these issues.

The report has been presented to the Working Group of Waterfront Toronto's Peer Review of the Environmental Assessment for this expansion.

The report can be viewed at this link: [http://www.waterfrontcoalition.ca/safety\\_report](http://www.waterfrontcoalition.ca/safety_report).

The safety issues examined in the report include: (1) implementation and size of Marine Exclusion Zones; (2) effects of noise and exhaust emissions of jets at MEZ boundaries; (3) effectiveness and feasibility of proposed jet blast deflector; (4) uncertainty in regulatory responsibility for BBTCA safety; (5) effects of aircraft wake turbulence; (6) clearances between aircraft and marine operations; (7) bird strike hazards; (8) scenarios in which an aircraft cannot complete a landing; (9) scenarios in which a jet aircraft takes off with one engine inoperable; (10) transparency in reporting safety incidents and concerns; and (11) runway approach lighting. ■

### Transport Action Canada set to launch its VIA 1-4-10 Plan Saving VIA is to be made a federal election issue with Plan debut

Cuts to VIA Rail are limiting the mobility options of Canadians at a time when sustainable transportation is needed more than ever given global warming, rising transportation costs, and ever more people looking for an alternative to driving and flying. Renewing and expanding our national passenger rail system appears daunting.

Renewing passenger rail requires a realistic plan that sets out just what is required to improve VIA on a rolling basis with deliverables in one, four and 10 years, as well as the estimated costs. This is the thrust of the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan*, which will be national in scope.

Transport Action Canada, and its regional affiliates, has called on transportation analyst and consultant Greg Gormick to prepare the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan*. It will rely heavily on U.S. precedents to deal with the fleet, infrastructure, service, legislative, financial and managerial needs. The *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* will be free of any political overtones short of highlighting the fact that no government has ever endorsed such an approach. A draft of the Plan is to be completed by the end of July, with the final Plan available by mid-August. It will be distributed in particular to as many federal election candidates as possible, with press releases reaching out to media across Canada. ■

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## St. Marys' Save VIA Rally Thursday, July 30

....see Page. 7 for details

...from the TAO website

> **Developing Higher Speed Railways Across Canada...** Dr. Avrum Regenstreif, long-time member and colleague of TAO, has completed a report on developing higher speed electric railways across Canada. It is intended as a backgrounder to foster discussion and it offers one possible long term vision on development of higher speed electrified railroads in Canada. ■

> June 18, 2015 letter of support for the Mississauga-Brampton Hurontario Main light rail project. ■

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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 *Transport Action*.

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 Ontario is requesting a \$10 supplement on a membership for mailing a paper copy of its newsletter, *Ontario Report*. Transport Action Canada is a registered charity. Donations to it receive a tax-credit receipt. Its website address is //www.transport-action.ca.

**Board meetings:** July 30, Sept 9, Oct 1, and Nov 5 at 5:30pm at Centre for Social Innovation, 215 Spadina Ave., Toronto. If you wish to participate, contact Peter Miasek to confirm as date, time and location may change.