



Ontario Report

Transport Action Ontario

**Southwestern Ontario's
Passenger Rail and Bus Service
Action Plan**

Network Southwest

Prepared by Greg Gormick
On Track Strategies
March 2015

SWOTA
southwestern ontario
transportation alliance



Full steam ahead on Network Southwest

Launch set for March 18 in St.Marys

After months of planning, re-search and public consultation, Network Southwest is under way. Following three presentations of the concept to large and enthusiastic audiences in Sarnia, St.Marys and Stratford, the release of the report that details this timely plan is slated for March 18 at the municipally-owned St.Marys railway station.

What is Network Southwest? It's a practical plan for affordable and convenient public transportation in

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Op-Ed Analysis

What makes Network Southwest different?

by Greg Gormick

To some, it may seem like just a handful of additional passenger trains, some new feeder bus routes and station modifications to allow the two modes to connect seamlessly. That's really all Network Southwest is in terms of hardware.

Even in the area of software, it isn't revolutionary, at least not in an international context. Like the

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FROM THE PRESIDENT - PETER MIASEK

Ontario discusses climate change strategy

In February, the Ontario Ministry of Environmental and Climate Change released two papers on climate change, one of the most important issues facing our province and planet. They were:



- Ontario's Climate Change Update 2014;
- Ontario's Climate Change Discussion Paper 2015.

The papers are posted on the Environmental Registry and comments will be received until March 29. Ontario will then prepare a long-term climate change strategy and a 5-year action plan for release.

The first paper summarized Ontario's progress on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions since 1990. Here are some highlights:

- Ontario's GHG emissions were 167 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2012, a drop of 10 Mt from 177 Mt in 1990, the base year. During the same period, the population of the province increased substantially and the economy (GDP) increased 62%. Improved energy efficiency, the changing mix of electricity generation, and the shifting composition of Ontario's industrial base have the impact of population and economic growth on GHG emissions to date.

- The estimate for 2014 is 165 Mt, a further drop of 2 Mt, and a total of 6.8% below 1990.

- In 2007, Ontario released its Climate Change Action Plan. The targets in that

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TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2015, CITY HALL, 100 Queen Street West, Toronto

- > Transport Action AGM 10 am-noon, Committee Rm 3, East Tower, City Hall
- > 1:45-4:00 pm; Public Forum, City Hall, Committee Room 3: topic and speakers to be announced. Please consult www.transport-action-ontario.com.

Nominations are open for the election of officers and directors. They may be submitted to the Secretary, Bruce Budd, at bfb2020@gmail.com, or by telephone at 416-690-3299.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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plan were 2014 – 6% below 1990, 2020 – 15% below 1990, 2050 – 80% below 1990. Therefore, the province actually beat the 2014 target. However, the 2020 forecast is not as rosy. Given current federal and provincial policies on renewable energy and conservation policies and assuming normal population and GDP growth, Ontario will not achieve the 2020 target. Emissions are forecast to rise slightly by 2020 to about 170 Mt.

- Of the 6 sectors studied in the report, transportation is definitely the worst performer, with buildings as the second worst. Between 1990 and 2012, emissions for the transportation sector, consisting largely of road (gasoline + diesel) transportation, increased from 45 to 57 Mt. Transportation now represents the largest single sector for GHG emissions in Ontario, at 34% of the total. This is despite significant improvement in vehicle emissions intensity, as emissions per passenger vehicle km travelled decreased 18%, and emissions per freight-tonne-km decreased 45%. Obviously the number of vehicles and the km travelled have increased dramatically since 1990!

- The 2020 forecast for transportation is also gloomy. Despite implementation of numerous significant policies, including *The Big Move* (a transit plan for the GTHA), new federal vehicle emissions standards, more biofuels and speed limiters on trucks, emissions in transportation are still expected to rise to 60 Mt.

The forecast failure to meet the 2020 targets and the huge challenges for 2050 point to the need for additional policies on GHG emissions, and form the need for the 2015 Discussion Paper.

The Discussion Paper speaks to the principles that Ontario will follow to achieve a low-carbon economy and the need for leadership, collaboration, transforming economic growth, science and technology, risk management and well-built communities. It identifies

four climate critical policies – a price on carbon, taking action in key sectors, supporting science, research and technology, and promoting climate resilience and risk management .

Certainly the most important of these is the price on carbon. A well-designed carbon pricing system is the most cost-effective approach to reducing GHG emissions, as it gives flexibility to reduce emissions in a way that is most efficient. Economic studies show that the impact of carbon pricing in many jurisdictions is either neutral or small.

Four options for carbon pricing are presented:

- Cap-and-trade program: this places a cap or limit on the total emissions by an economy or sector of an economy. The cap is divided into permits. Some permits can be distributed free of charge to certain emitters in order to address competitiveness issues. The remaining permits can be auctioned. Emitters must acquire enough permits to match their emissions. Emitters can sell unneeded permits to emitters who need more.

- Baseline and credit system: this sets a baseline intensity for each emitter, which is then required to improve its efficiency by a set amount. Emitters that overachieve can obtain credits that can be sold to other businesses that exceeded their limits.

- Carbon tax: this applies a charge to each tonne of GHG emissions. It is often applied widely across the economy to all fuels, often at the point of sale. There is no limit or cap on emissions.

- Regulation and Performance Standards: although this is the typical way that government has regulated other pollutants, this method is not preferred in the Discussion Paper as it requires the regulator to have specific knowledge about numerous processes.

A survey of North American and world jurisdictions shows that many have carbon pricing systems in place, including:

- Quebec established a cap-and-trade program for large electricity gen-

erators and industrial facilities in 2013, expanding to transportation and heating fuels in 2015. This program is linked to California’s cap-and-trade program.

- Alberta established a baseline and credit system for large industry and electricity emitters in 2007, specifying 12% reduction in emissions intensity. Emitters have the option of buying offsets from a diversity of registered Alberta emitters (small or large) or paying \$15/tonne for emissions in excess of targets into a fund for research and development on GHG reductions. The program has reduced GHG by 50 Mt over 7 years and raised \$500M.

- British Columbia introduced a carbon tax at \$10/tonne in 2008, now at \$30/tonne. The broad-based tax covers fuels used for transportation, heating and industrial processes and is revenue-neutral. BC also intends to establish a baseline and credit system for liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities. LNG facilities can use offsets or contribute \$25/tonne to a fund.

- Nine states in the NE USA (Regional GHG Initiative - RGGI) set up a cap-and-trade system in 2009 for the power sector that has successfully reduced emissions, cut electricity rates and raised revenues.

The Discussion Paper also speaks to actions in key sectors to support transformation to a low carbon resilient economy. Within transportation, it speaks to the obvious actions of improving active transportation and public transit, zero emission vehicles and alternative fuels. For buildings and communities, it speaks to curbing urban sprawl, creating complete communities, energy conservation upgrades in existing buildings and new buildings that are even more energy efficient.

Transport Action Ontario intends to comment on these papers, likely as part of the Move the GTHA collaborative. The comments will likely focus on carbon pricing mechanisms. Almost all experts, including industry leaders, favour a carbon tax versus cap and trade, as it is simpler to implement, more transparent, captures all

sectors of society and has the potential to change individual behaviour. The biggest downside is that the magnitude of the emission reduction from a given tax level cannot be predicted ahead of time. In our view, a carbon tax, combined with regulations on vehicle fuel economy, is the best means to reduce GHG emissions in the problematic transportation sector.

However, there is speculation that that the Government of Ontario is leaning towards cap-and-trade, as this may be more politically palatable with the general public. Although cap-and-trade has the benefit of containing a hard emissions target, most experts see problems with cap-and-trade. These include complexity, heavily influenced by vested interests, need for an extensive regulatory regime, and creating entry barriers to new firms. The price of carbon can fluctuate, creating uncertainty in the market price of permits. Although emissions can be ratcheted down over time through a falling number of permits and through an expanding number of auctioned permits, this is difficult to manage. Rex Tillerson, CEO of Exxon Mobil, worries about an army of “Wall Street emissions brokers.” It is hard for me to see how cap-and-trade would effectively reduce emissions in the problematic road (gasoline +diesel) transportation sector.

Regardless of the carbon pricing mechanism, we believe it should not be revenue neutral, but should generate positive new revenue for government. These new revenues should be largely invested in sustainable transportation, both in the GTHA and the balance of Ontario. Of all the sectors studied, transportation is the largest emitter and had the poorest performance, thus justifying this focus. ■

Full steam ahead on Network Southwest

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Southwestern Ontario. It includes: Frequent intercity rail passenger service on the existing infrastructure. Coordinated bus services to towns and

cities not on the rail network to broaden its coverage and utility. Revamped stations to stitch the modes together. And all of it achievable relatively quickly and at modest cost.

In mounting the full Network Southwest campaign, Transport Action Ontario (TAO) is working closely with the sponsoring coalition, the Southwestern Ontario Transportation Alliance (SWOTA). Initial funding for the project, including the report, has been provided by a grant from the John McCullum Fund of Transport Action Canada.

The seeds of this campaign were planted by the VIA Rail cuts in Southwestern Ontario in 2012, which served as a wake-up call for the region. It's not only that few trains are left, but intercity bus routes have vanished as well. Cities the size of Stratford and Sarnia have minimal intercity public transportation and others, such as Goderich and St. Thomas, have none. The mobility gap caused by the loss of these transportation options is impeding the region's economic renewal and damaging its livability.

For many Southwestern Ontarians, the 2012 VIA cuts were the last straw. Independently, citizens in Sarnia, Stratford, St. Marys, Chatham and Toronto demanded restoration and expansion of VIA services. In November 2013, the Southwest Economic Alliance, an economic development organization based in London, held a conference on the region's transportation needs. Stemming from this conference, SWOTA was formed to seek solutions.

Its members include Rail Advocacy in Lambton (Sarnia), Save VIA (St. Marys), the Stratford branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women and TAO.

To meet the mobility needs of the region, the Network Southwest plan proposes an integrated system of rail

and bus services that can be implemented in three to five years. In its first wave of improvements, service on all three VIA lines would build incrementally using existing equipment as an interim measure. But the cornerstone of Network Southwest would be the purchase of a 40-car fleet of bi-level, push-pull cars to deliver increased frequencies and decreased operating costs.

Starting with interurban bus routes now operated by GO and a handful of municipal transit agencies, the feeder bus system would be phased in, with schedules coordinated with the trains.

Network Southwest is based on existing examples around the world, especially in the U.S. It's new for Ontario, but we're not reinventing the wheel. What's more, our proposal is timely. Southwestern Ontario's full-spectrum of mobility needs has been neglected far too long.

The Network Southwest report describes the necessary steps and how each level of government – federal, provincial and municipal – can contribute. The initial capital cost to implement the plan is \$400 million, mainly for new rolling stock and some strategic infrastructure projects. That's less than the cost of one kilometre of new subway in Toronto! The existing federal support for VIA trains in Southwestern Ontario would cover a major portion of operating costs after revenues.

The full Network Southwest report and coverage of the St. Marys launch will be available at www.swota.ca, www.savevia.ca, and www.transport-action-ontario.com. More public forums are now being planned. We are looking for people and groups to sponsor meetings to provide opportunities to present this innovative plan across Southwestern Ontario. ■

What makes Network Southwest different?

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successful Amtrak state-supported corridors, Network Southwest is dependent on a federal-provincial partnership, with the two levels of government sharing costs and a common goal.

What makes Network Southwest different is nothing but its timing. While all of the elements in the plan have been suggested in the past in Canada, the parties that would have to enact them haven't been interested. Neither the federal nor any of the provincial governments have ever wanted to discuss the need for both of them to get their intercity passenger transportation policies in alignment and take cooperative action.

In Ontario, that situation has changed. When Premier Kathleen Wynne unveiled her \$29-billion Moving Ontario Forward plan during the 2014 provincial election campaign, she echoed sentiments that have been spoken by transportation advocates for decades, saying, "If we want to boost productivity and grow our economy, we need to build a seamless transportation network across the province."

Among other projects, what the premier was offering was GO expansion, the conversion of the wholly-

owned GO lines into an electrified, high-frequency service to be known as Regional Express Rail (RER) and a high-speed rail (HSR) line from Toronto to London. While those services certainly won't supply a province-wide solution, they will attack the mobility problems of a large swath of Ontario with rail-based ammo.

And while solutions offered up during a campaign usually add up to something less than their original promise after an election, this one seems to be an exception. Following the Wynne government's return to power, the premier sent mandate letters to her cabinet ministers reiterating and clarifying the promises that had been put out on the street during the campaign. In the instructions to Minister of Transportation Steven Del Duca, RER was reaffirmed as a priority and the scope of the HSR proposal was expanded to include Windsor.

Controversial though some of these projects may be – especially HSR – they are clear indications that the current provincial government is supportive of rail-based public transportation solutions and they are not confined to the GTHA. That's groundbreaking. It makes this provincial government the first to look beyond its traditional sphere of re-

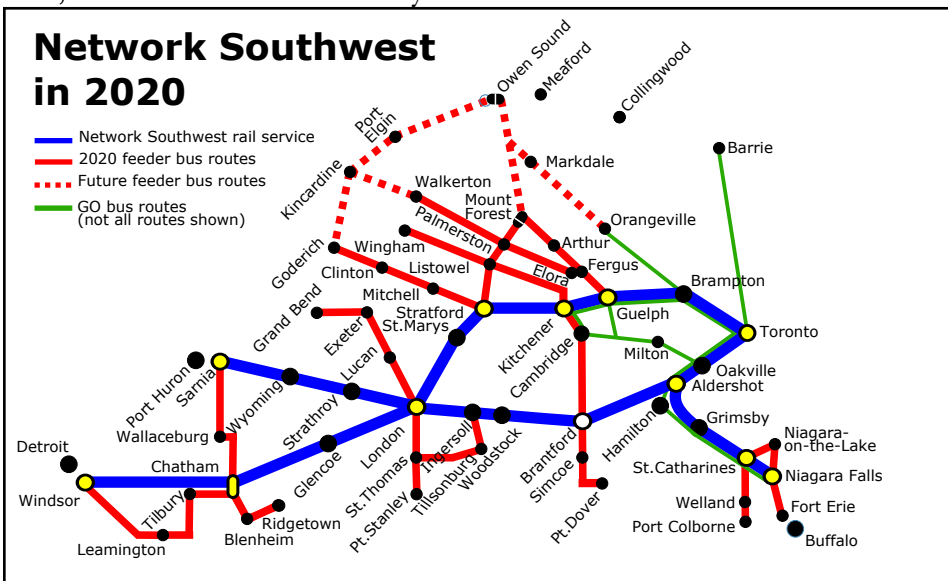
sponsibility, recognizing that a dysfunctional national transportation system has negative implications that must be addressed within its own boundaries, even if the other level of government is missing in action.

That brings us to the federal side of the equation. Here, one would be tempted to say the timing is bad for a plan such as Network Southwest, which requires the two levels of government to get in synch. After a flurry of early support for VIA, the Harper government now seems thoroughly uninterested in dealing with Canada's ongoing rail passenger dilemma. The failure to reinforce VIA's flawed \$923 million capital investment plan and the budgetary cuts that led to the service reductions of 2012 are the clearest indications of this.

Another negative indicator of the current federal government's mindset on transportation is its failure to engage on the issue of intercity bus service. The industry is in turmoil, with ongoing service reductions nationwide. But from the federal government, nary a word has been heard. It would, therefore, be logical to believe that a plan such as Network Southwest wouldn't have a chance.

But this is a federal election year. One of the most encouraging aspects of the Network Southwest public forums has been the attendance of candidates of the Big Three political parties, all of whom have publicly voiced support for the concept of a federal-provincial partnership to enact it. That includes those running for the Conservative Party.

No one would expect anything concrete to occur on this front in the run-up to an election that may change Canada's political landscape. What matters is what comes after. The fact that Network Southwest is already on the political radar screen in Southwestern Ontario is a highly encouraging sign. The plan is laying the groundwork for a serious debate about the kind of post-election change that must occur if the steady



slide in intercity rail and bus service across Canada is to be arrested and reversed.

What makes the timing of Network Southwest even more fortuitous is the reaction of municipal politicians. In Southwestern Ontario, they have clearly had enough of the neglect their communities have suffered as VIA and bus service has withered. Those municipal representatives who have attended the Network Southwest public forums have all said the plan gives them a strong basis on which to lobby the two senior levels of government.

Indications so far are that the municipalities of Southwestern Ontario are going to make Network Southwest a rallying point for their efforts to acquire the decent levels of public transportation access their communities require if they are going to thrive economically and socially. Having seen in the presentations just what has been done in three U.S. jurisdictions, they now know this is a plan that can be undertaken quickly and at reasonable cost.

So, what makes Network Southwest different from all the other calls that have emanated for years from Transport Action and others who have seen the desperate need for public transportation reform in Canada? Nothing but the timing. ■

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An audience of 150 people shared the Network Southwest presentation at Stratford, ON, on Feb. 12, 2015, sponsored by the Stratford branch of the Canadian Federation of University Women (photo: www.gettingthere.ca).

Book Review

David R. Spencer - Transit Progress Derailed: Ontario Hydro's Radial Railway Scheme

The radial railway was an Ontario colloquialism for an interurban electric railroad. The interurban was an early 20th century phenomenon, an intercity form of the streetcar line. Interurbans traveled on the sides of highways, or were built along existing steam railways, and used local streetcar lines in towns and cities. They were quite common in the U.S. east and mid-west. A number of interurban lines were extensions of local streetcar companies. Smaller companies were eventually merged and they often became subsidiaries of private electric utilities, though some were owned by railways. They were done in by good roads and automobiles and, in particular, by the Great Depression. They provided frequent local service, something that steam railways didn't do well, and they were popular for several decades.

The growth of radials in Ontario followed the pattern described above. By 1917, interurban hubs included Windsor, Chatham, London, Kitchener, Hamilton, St. Catharines, and Toronto. Considering the longer routes, there were radials between Toronto and Sutton (on Lake Simcoe), Guelph, and Port Credit. Hamilton was connected to Burlington and Oakville, and to Brantford. St. Catharines was connected between Port Dalhousie through to Niagara Falls. From Kitchener one could travel by interurban to Cambridge, Brantford and Port Dover. London, St. Thomas and Port Stanley were connected. A radial connected Windsor to Leamington. The London, Kitchener, and St. Catharines-based interurbans lasted into the early 1950s. These were built to steam railway standards and carried carload freight.

The Ontario experience with radials, however, was unique in North America in one respect. In 1912, Adam Beck, the chair of Ontario's hydroelectric commission, proposed a network of "high speed" electric radial railways for southwestern Ontario. Beck was a leading Conservative politician of his time. He had led a movement to create a public power sys-

tem for Ontario with great success. He hoped for similar success with his radial plan. The Hydro plan called for radials stretching from Uxbridge, Port Perry and Bowmanville to Toronto, from Toronto to Hamilton and Niagara Falls, and from Toronto to Port Credit, Guelph, Kitchener, St. Marys, London and Sarnia, taking in existing radials but putting the system entirely on dedicated right-of-ways even in cities. Beck was able to obtain legislation that made municipalities key participants in the plan through bond financing with Hydro as builder and operator. Many cities agreed to the plan and joined an association to promote the cause.

Beck's radial plan did not have smooth sailing as the investment was not small change and Beck also had political and business opponents. The main barrier, though, was the Great War. Not unsurprisingly, the Conservative government suspended any radial railway development during the war (1914-1918). Railway building in general was under a cloud as two of Canada's three transcontinental railways of the time approached bankruptcy. (Between 1918 and 1923 the Canadian National was created by joining together the Canadian Northern system with the Grand Trunk system.)

After the war ended, a sudden shift in the political landscape in Ontario spelled the end of Beck's political power. The 1919 provincial election resulted in a coalition government of the United Farmers of Ontario and the small Independent Labour Party, with Ernest Drury of the UFO becoming Premier. The new government questioned Beck's arbitrary management of Hydro that was without checks and balances and, in particular, it went after Beck's interurban scheme. A Royal Commission chaired by Judge Robert F. Sutherland was appointed in the summer of 1920 to investigate the feasibility of the radials. The anti-radial bias of the Commission was apparent; there was no chance that it would support Beck's scheme. The Commission's Report of December, 1921, was highly negative. Drury then announced that the Province would not back any municipal bonds sold to build radials.

David R. Spencer, professor of information media studies at the University of Western Ontario, grew up in

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Transit Progress Derailed

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Simcoe, ON, and was familiar with its railways and electric interurban. One of his grandfathers had worked for the Lake Erie & Northern electric railway that connected Galt to Port Dover through Simcoe. Fascinated with Ontario's radials, Spencer wrote an MA thesis on the demise of Beck's radial plan in 1982. For his thesis, Spencer worked with archivists bringing together materials from many sources. Thought lost, the transcripts of the Sutherland Commission were located by Spencer in Hydro's archives. Spencer focussed his thesis on the testimony at the Commission.

Spencer's new book is much more than a republication of his thesis. For the book, Spencer brought on board archivist and writer Ted Wickson who edited the manuscript, added histories of individual interurban lines in southwestern Ontario, and brought together the many maps and photographs present throughout the book. The book was published by Railfare DC Books in 2012.

With the transcripts of the Commission in hand, Spencer was able to highlight the clash of the Commission's expert witnesses versus those of Hydro. Beck was never called to testify for obvious reasons given his charismatic personality. The Hydro plan was attacked for being excessively costly, for faulty population projections, and for allegedly dodgy revenue and operating cost estimates. Much was made of the financial difficulties of interurbans in the U.S. as of 1920. Ontario's highway system was being rapidly expanded and it was argued that, with good roads, there was little need for radials. The Drury government was clearly auto and truck friendly.

The Commission sided with the government's witnesses. One Commissioner, however, issued a minority report that saw merit in one radial line, the Toronto-Hamilton-Niagara Falls route. This route passed through a number of large communities and had stretches of quality right-of-way already in place. Quality right-of-way gaps needed to be filled such as between Toronto and Oakville and from Hamilton to St. Catharines. Beck wrote a 43-page rebuttal, claiming that the Commission had ignored examining several highly successful

interurbans in the U.S. that were models that could be followed such as the Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee (CNS&M).

Spencer speculates that, had Beck quickly gotten radial construction started, key pieces might have been in place before the Great War, these becoming exemplary. The book notes that GO Transit's commuter rail lines are in corridors that were planned for radials.

It is the case that a few strong interurban lines in the U.S. made it through the Depression, were invaluable during WWII, but then fell victim to the post-war interstate highway system and the growth of car-based suburban sprawl. In the U.S., the CNS&M was abandoned in 1963, though its ridership was still very high. No transit-oriented public policy was in place to save this valuable intercity and commuter electric railroad. Had a radial entered Toronto on dedicated track built in the 1920s, and lasted through WWII, it might have well fallen in the same way as the CNS&M even in Toronto.

One interesting footnote not covered by Spencer: Beck did get his day in court in Toronto when City Council debate a radial line entrance to the city along the lakeshore from the west in 1922. The Province required the City to take such a public works to a referendum. Beck demanded a six-track route exclusively for Hydro and refused a compromise for a four-track route shared with the TTC. Dubbed Beck's Waterfront Grab by the press, on January 1, 1923, the rapid transit entrance proposal went down to defeat in a fairly close vote. Beck died in 1925 at the age of 68.

For readers interested in Ontario transportation history, Spencer's excellent *Transit Progress Derailed* is a must-have resource and reference work that would complement other key authors such as John F. Due (1966), and Robert M. Stamp (1989). Probably for reasons of funding, Railfare produced Spencer's book in a half-book format with small print and little space for appreciating its historic photographs. This reader hopes for an e-book version that would give it the generous page space that it deserves and be a comfortable viewing and read. ■

- Tony Turrington

Algoma News

Third party operator selected to operate Sault-Hearst and Algoma Canyon trains

In January 2014, the federal government announced its intention to end its \$2.2 million annual subsidy to the Algoma Central Railway's (ACR) train between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst, ON, a 476 km route. ACR is a part of CN Rail. Public protests were strong and the federal government put off the end of the subsidy to March 31, 2015, pending a community effort to come up with a plan to create a passenger train service that would not need a subsidy.

Shortly thereafter, a Working Group was formed with representatives from the City of the Sault, Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation, Municipality of Wawa, Town of Hearst, First Nations, Township of Dubreuilville, Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma Kinniwabi Travel Association, Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, and home, cottage and land owners served by the ACR. One of the first acts of the Working Group was to retain the accounting firm of BDO Canada to assess the economic impacts of the threatened ACR train service. BDO found that the train generates \$38 million plus in annual economic activity, supporting more than 200 jobs.

With the agreement of CN, the Working Group issued a request for third-party operation of the ACR train, with the expectation that a third-party operator would innovate in ways that would improve the economics of the rail service.

In a March 13, 2015, press release, the Working Group announced that CN had accepted the proposal of Railmark Canada to operate the Sault-Hearst train. In a separate deal, CN also awarded a tender to Railmark to operate the ACR's round-trip day-excursion train between the Sault and Agawa Canyon. The press release stated that, "For more than 15 years, Railmark has operated in 19 countries around the world, including a significant presence in Ontario and Michi-

gan. The company operates short-line railways and tourist rail expeditions such as dinner and entertainment tours. Rail-mark also provides rail logistics and mechanical services." It added, quoting Allen Brown, President and CEO of Railmark as saying, "We see great potential in the ACR passenger service. We look forward to continuing to engage with the regional stakeholders, CN and the Government of Canada to keep the line operating and make it a viable and sustainable operation."

Railmark plans to increase ridership by offering additional services and expanding marketing. It intends to add dining tours and other entertainment-based excursions as higher-value purchases. Its remote service is seen as becoming self-sustaining within five years.

The proposal to use a third-party to operate the Sault-Hearst train is not out of the woods just yet. The Rail-mark plan asks the federal government for a \$7 million dollar grant for its first five years, something which the feds would have to agree to by the looming deadline of March 31. ■



Above: Redering of Alstom Citadis electric LRT vehicle ordered for Ottawa's Confederation Line now under construction. (www.ligneconfederationline.ca)

Below: Mock-up of new Citadis LRT vehicle on display, Aberdeen Pavilion, Lansdowne Park, Ottawa. (www.mindwalk613.com; photo: Caio Fernandes, Jan. 2015.)



Ottawa News

Ottawa transit and rail

Museum of Science and Technology. In September the Canada Science and Technology Museum closed due to the discovery of high levels of mould in an exterior wall of this early 1960's warehouse-type building. Further investigation revealed further water infiltration and the presence of asbestos. Accordingly, the roof and exterior walls will require major re-building. On November 17, \$80 million was announced for major repairs. The museum will not re-open until sometime in 2017. Fortunately the collection operated by the Bytown Railway Society is in a separate building, so their summer rail operations should be able to continue.

Confederation Line LRT Construction Update. Progress continues on tunnelling in the core and the three downtown stations. Further work continues on the large storage and maintenance facility on Belfast Road near the Ottawa VIA Station and the new LRT access spur under the VIA line.

Phase 2 planning of the Confederation Line extension west of Tunney's Pasture to Lincoln Field has been highly controversial. Buses have been using the scenic, curving Ottawa River Parkway for most of the distance. However, the National Capital Commission wants the buses removed and does not want the LRT alignment along or even near the riverfront. The former narrow CPR alignment has been built up and the former OER Byron streetcar line is now a linear park further constraining a low-cost solution. After serious disagreements between the City and NCC over alignments, they have given themselves 100 days to work out an acceptable compromise. Unfortunately, it is expected that much of the proposed line will be cut-and-cover shallow tunnel, greatly increasing the cost per mile.

Trillium Line O-Train Update.

Although two passing sidings were constructed in the summer of 2013 to allow four Citadis trains, rather than two Talent trains, to operate at once, there have been numerous delays in initiating these capacity and frequency enhancements. Apparently the signalling must be operated on a Centralized Traffic Control System (CTC) rather than the simpler Operations Control System (OCS) previously in use. For now, there appear to be increasing delays as switches and signals are set, adding cost to the operation.

After a week of testing in February, operation of the upgraded O-Train line started on Monday, March 2, but malfunctioning switches at the Carleton University station caused a delay later in the morning. Early Tuesday more serious issues with switching circuitry and block insulators arose suspending service, with resumption Wednesday afternoon, March 4.

The disposition of the three Bombardier Talent trains is uncertain -- they are less than 15 years old -- although one was damaged in a summer 2014 derailment and was not repaired.

A Phase 2 extension of the Trillium O-Train Line is also moving forward. The diesel O-Train line would be extended southwards, with a spur to the Ottawa Airport (YOW). At some time, the line may be fully double-tracked and converted to electric LRT. Public consultations on the options will take place during 2015 as part of the Environmental Assessment process. In parallel there are discussions to expand the Airport Parkway from two lanes to four.

CN Beechburg Rail Removal. CN has completed its removal of the continuous welded-rail track from Kanata to Portage-du-Fort. A few stretches of less-valuable jointed rail remain to be removed. Sadly, this means Ottawa is unlikely to ever have GO-type commuter rail up the Ottawa River Valley. ■

-- Bernie Geiger, Ottawa ON



New Alstom diesel Citadis O-Train cars, first day of service on Trillium Line in Ottawa, Monday, Mar. 2. Photo: Bernie Geiger.

TAO Activities

Transport Action Ontario’s advocacy and educational work by board members and other volunteers is ongoing. The Latest News section of our website summarizes recent projects with links to written statements, submissions or reports. Recent activities include:

Letter to the editor of the *London Free Press* about mobility and connectivity (January 9). Discussion about the economic decline of southwestern Ontario motivated Ken Westcar, TAO board member, to respond pointing out something obvious but generally overlooked: the region won’t be able to get back on its feet without augmenting its mobility and connectivity. Current demographics and the nature of employment in the new economy require region-wide public transportation based on rail, bus, and local transit. Prosperity depends on it. (Read more on TAO website, Latest News, “Southwest Ontario ignores transit issues at its peril”).

Intercity Public Transportation in Ontario – Benefits, Challenges and Solutions. TAO President, Peter Miasek, gave a presentation and participated in a panel discussion at the plenary session of the Canadian Federation of University Women Standing

Committee Meetings on January 24, 2015 in Toronto. The plenary session theme was “Getting There: Integrated Public Transportation for Ontario.” A copy of the slide presentation is available on the TAO website.

Response to interview with VIA Rail Canada CEO on “Tracking a Turnaround.” The *Globe and Mail* newspaper published an interview with Yves Desjardin-Siciliano, CEO and President of VIA Rail Canada, on December 23, 2014. The article outlined his vision for the crown corporation. TAO has issued a response to some of the comments made by Mr. Desjardin-Scilliano. Our statement can be viewed by following the links to it starting with the “home page” of our TAO website.

Support for Algoma Central Railway (ACR) passenger service. On January 29, TAO President Peter Miasek wrote to the Honourable Lisa Raitt, Minister of Transport, in support of funding the ACR Sault-Hearst train. The letter pointed out the strong economic spinoffs of this rail service. Miasek wrote: “The total economic impact of the Algoma Central Railway

Passenger Service also includes tax revenue, which annually accrues to all levels of Government and is estimated to be between \$5.1 million and \$6.4 million, as well as generating employment opportunities estimated at approximately 170 to 220 jobs.” He continued: “The discontinuation of the Algoma Central Railway Passenger Service will result in a significant loss of these economic benefits, tax revenue and jobs and an additional one-time economic impact on the values of properties located on, or in close proximity to the rail line, in an amount ranging between \$60 million and \$67 million. Additionally, discontinuation of this passenger service will result in a number of businesses, communities and residents being unable to access their properties, homes and cottages via public thoroughfares. ■

CEO and President of VIA Rail Canada, on December 23, 2014. The article outlined his vision for the crown corporation. TAO has issued a response to some of the comments made by Mr. Desjardin-Scilliano. Our statement can be viewed by following the links to it starting with the “home page” of our TAO website.

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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](http://www.transport-action.ca).

Board meetings: Feb 5, Mar 5, Apr 2, June 4, July 30, Sept 9, Oct 1, and Nov 5 at 5:30pm at Centre for Social Innovation, 215 Spadina Ave., Toronto. Our AGM is to be Apr 25. If you wish to participate, contact Peter Miasek to confirm as date, time and location may change.

Ontario Report is published by Transport Action Ontario bi-monthly in Feb., Apr., June, Aug., Oct. and Dec. Contributions of news and items are welcome. Submissions, including articles and letters, are subject to acceptance and editing. Statements in this publication are those of the respective authors and are not official policy which is approved by the Board of Transport Action Ontario.

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