



Ontario Report

Transport Action Ontario



Metrolinx opens new GO York Street Concourse under tracks on the west side of Toronto's Union Station on April 26, 2015. Photo shows new ticket counter area. See story on Page 6.

April 23rd provincial budget sets out next wave of GTHA transit infrastructure

In April, 2014, the minority Ontario Liberal government announced \$29 billion in spending on transit projects over the next 10-years, \$15B going to the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), and \$14B for the rest of the province. Also promised was the electrification of GO's rail lines that would enable all-day 15 minute train service with shorter travel times. These promises became central to the Liberal's May budget and the subsequent election of June.

The majority Liberal's April 23, 2015 budget confirms transit as a spending priority, and sets out specific projects for funding within the GTHA.

Mississauga-Brampton LRT. Funding for the Hurontario-Main LRT is now in place. LRT will be built on dedicated right-of-way from the lakeshore in Mississauga to the GO station in downtown Brampton at a cost of \$1.6B.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT - PETER MIASEK

2014-2015 year in review for TAO



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 successful year.

This abridged report will cover our activities in the community.

Major Projects and Programs

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. Intercity Public Transport

Regional activity advocating for improved intercity passenger rail and bus continued at a high pace in two parts of the province – Algoma Region and Southwestern Ontario.

As members recall, in February 2015, it was announced that the Algoma Central Railway (ACR) passenger service would be shut down due to the loss of the federal government subsidy. Transport Action and its affiliate, Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) responded promptly, conducting

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Op-Ed Analysis

VIA Rail smoke and mirrors

by Greg Gormick

Like Thomas the Tank Engine, Canada's passenger trains are headed for shining times and it won't cost taxpayers a cent. I know that for a fact because I heard it from the Conservative appointee running our national rail passenger system.

VIA president Yves Desjardins-Siciliano has recently been schmoozing

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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town hall sessions. We believe that these helped persuade Ottawa to grant a one year extension of the subsidy to March, 2015. In the intervening year, the multi-stakeholder ACR Passenger Service Stakeholder Working Group, which includes CAPT, conducted an economic benefits study of the ACR service and contracted with a third party operator (Railmark Canada) to run the service at a lower cost than previously. In March, 2015, the federal government announced a three-year funding grant to cover operation of the ACR by Railmark. Thus, as of this writing, the ACR story is a great example of the power of local advocacy to achieve positive change.

TAO has been very active in Southwestern Ontario. In April, the province announced its Moving Ontario Forward plan, which includes a very ambitious plan to develop High Speed Rail (HSR) passenger service to link Toronto to London/Windsor. TAO welcomes this HSR announcement as it signals a major recognition of the importance of high performance intercity passenger rail in a modern society. In December, the Minister of Transportation announced the start of the Environmental Assessment for the HSR project. Despite this start, HSR service will be years away in the future. We believe that there is an immediate need to conventionally improve rail passenger and intercity bus service throughout the region to resolve public mobility problems present today, and as a stepping stone to the delivery of HSR.

In the spring of 2014, various Southwestern Ontario NGOs, including TAO, took a deliberate step to form a collaborative known as the Southwestern Ontario Transportation Alliance (SWOTA). SWOTA members have been active in contacting local media and local elected officials about the importance of intercity public transport. The group meets monthly to share intelligence, support

each other, and work on common projects to improve public transportation choices in the region. A website has been set up.

The most significant project being conducted by SWOTA is underway. In December, we were successful in raising donations for our John F. McCullum Ontario Fund to engage Greg Gormick of On Track Strategies to develop a five-year incremental multi-modal passenger improvement plan, based on proven approaches undertaken in the USA. Our thanks to the various citizen and NGO donors in Southwestern Ontario who contributed money to this project. The plan has been finalized under the name *Network Southwest: Passenger Rail and Bus Service Action Plan*. It was released on a preliminary basis in Sarnia in January and formally in St. Marys in March. It is practical, affordable and will serve as the basis to conventionally improve rail passenger and intercity bus services in the short term.

Town Hall meetings and other public events have been held across the region to inform the public, elected officials at all levels of government, and media about *Network Southwest*. We have recently secured financial commitments from two municipalities – Stratford and St Marys, with hopefully more to come, to allow other steps in the Network Southwest campaign to proceed.

b. Regional Rapid Rail for the GTHA

As members recall, in mid-2013, TAO released a major report on GTHA Regional Rapid Rail. In brief, it proposed upgrading and electrifying most of the existing GO network, using EMUs and adding more stations, to convert it to a “surface subway.” We then embarked on an extensive campaign of presenting the report to transit professionals and elected officials at all three levels of government across the region.

Last April, we were thrilled when Premier Wynne announced electrification of GO with 15 minute service as a keynote program within the “Move

Ontario Forward” plan, under the moniker “Regional Express Rail” (RER). With the re-election of the Liberals in June, the RER project moved into high gear at Metrolinx. The agency now has an entire department working to implement RER within 10 years. Just last week, the top priority RER lines were announced. Planning and field work on RER continues at a fever pace.

In late May, we were again thrilled when Toronto mayoral candidate John Tory announced his Smart Track plan, again a close relative to our plan. With the election of Mayor Tory in October, this adds even more impetus to the Regional Rapid Rail concept.

In summary, our Regional Rapid Rail program has succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. Again, TAO owes a huge debt of gratitude to the report author, Karl Junkin, for his excellent and persistent work.

c. Funding and Governance for Ontario Transportation

TAO is a core member of a collaborative of prominent NGOs called Move the GTHA. (MTGTHA). It was initially formed to improve the public and political climate for new transportation revenue tools. The provincial Liberal announcement last April of a dedicated 10-year \$29B province-wide transportation fund, largely funded by repurposing gas tax funds and by borrowing, was a positive step in the right direction. The asset sales announced recently by the province will increase the fund to \$31.5B.

Subsequently, MTGTHA is shifting its activities to other, related areas where public awareness and engagement needs to be built: (1) new revenue tools, such as carbon pricing, which are still needed as the fund does not come close to meeting the transit and transportation needs of the province; (2) completion of approved projects, such as Finch and Sheppard LRTs without political interference; (3) smart project prioritization, to avoid future fiascos where politics trumps sound business analysis; (4) governance accountability

including transparency and project tracking; and (5) accelerating implementation.

d. Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport Runway Extension and Introduction of Jets.

As reported last year, TAO was a key player in convincing Toronto City Council to vote in Spring, 2014 to defer any approval of the extension and jet introduction pending completion of definitive studies. Various studies are underway, including an Environmental Assessment and an Airport Master Plan/Runway Design. TAO is actively tracking these studies and commenting as appropriate.

The various NGOs opposed to this project have formed the Greater Waterfront Coalition. TAO is a core member. Our concerns fall into two areas – safety and socioeconomic costs/benefits. The Coalition is seeking funding to hire independent experts in these two areas.

Other Projects and Programs

a. Freight Railway Safety

Freight railway safety continues to be an issue of concern in many Canadian communities, especially as derailments continue frequently across Canada. In Toronto, we participate in a coalition called “Safe Rail Communities” that advocates improved rail technology, improved rolling stock, stabilized cargoes, and an end to self-regulation.

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

The environmental assessment for this portion of the elevated expressway is in progress. Three members of the TAO board sit on the stakeholder advisory committee. TAO continues to support the “Remove” option, due to its decidedly lower cost and much greater city building/development potential, in comparison to the “hybrid” model which keeps an elevated portion at the east end of the waterfront.

c. Toronto Subway Studies

TAO has representatives on two stakeholder advisory committees that are involved with two separate Toronto subway studies: (i) Downtown Relief

Line Study – TAO has long supported the need for this line, which would provide an alternate route from the BD subway to downtown Toronto. The present study is looking at station locations. (2) Scarborough Subway Extension from Kennedy station to Sheppard Ave – although TAO does not support this extension project, we participate on this committee to monitor its status.

d. Canada Transportation Act Review

In mid-2014, Transport Minister Raitt announced the review and revision of the Canada Transportation Act and related legislation. In December, TAO prepared a submission on behalf of all the affiliates in the Transport Action family. Our submission focussed on railway-based transportation, where we have extensive knowledge. The brief covered ten specific recommendations for change.

e. New International Trade Crossing (Detroit – Windsor)

In February, the Canadian government announced it would pay for the US customs plaza in Detroit in order to speed up building of this planned bridge. TAO has long opposed this bridge and highway project, formerly known as Detroit River International Crossing, and issued a position paper opposing this latest initiative. ■

April 25, 2015

Next wave transit projects

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It will have 23 stops and a 47 minute ride. The EA was completed in September of 2014, construction to begin in 2018, and completion is to be in 2021. A loop off the line will serve Mississauga’s City Centre.

Toronto Finch West LRT. This line was already previously funded, although the budget did announce that procurement would start in 2015. This 11km LRT with 18 stops will run from the Keele Street subway station on the Spadina subway extension to York University and Vaughan, west to the Humber College north campus. The EA for this Transit City line was completed in

2010. Construction will start in 2016 for completion in 2021. The current Finch West bus line is one of the busiest in the city.

Toronto Sheppard East LRT.

This \$1.0B LRT is funded, but construction is to follow completion of the Finch LRT, putting off its construction start to 2021, with completion in 2026. The line begins at the Don Mills subway station and ends at Morningside Drive, 13km in length with 26 stops. This delay has cheered up Councillor Jim Karygianis who wants the line to be a subway, while Councillor Shelley Carroll has decried the delay, noting that construction was started in 2010 and then cancelled at a loss of \$80 million.

Passed over. A project passed over but highly regarded by TAO was the Hamilton B-line LRT between McMaster University and Eastgate. An EA was completed for this 13.4km, 17 station project in 2011. This LRT line became a political football when Hamilton’s previous mayor sidetracked the project, with Hamilton’s newly elected mayor reopening the decision to proceed. Weakened support for the project was likely a factor leading the Province not to fund it at this time. In this editor’s view, Hamilton has missed out on benefitting from the proven city building development that LRT brings following its construction.

Electrification’s long road

ahead. The Liberal majority government is moving ahead with electrification. One chart that we have seen shows electrification completed by 2022/2024 for all GO rail routes except Milton and Richmond Hill lines. A seven to nine year completion is very optimistic (five year completion times are not unusual in jurisdictions with existing electrified railways), and the announced 10-year funding for the GTHA is not likely to be sufficient for this very large project. Regional Express Rail, or RER, is the brand name for the electrified system.

RER will undergo a business case analysis. The work plan includes steps

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Next wave transit projects

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for each of the lines to be electrified. These steps include the service concept, infrastructure needed to achieve the service concept, the associated electrification plan, phasing plan to electrify, building stations, acquisition of rolling stock, etc., and an engagement plan to meet with communities, municipalities, elected officials, and stakeholders. Metrolinx staff will report to the Metrolinx board regularly on progress with respect to RER.

Hurdles, uncertainties, conundrums. Toronto elected a new mayor in October of 2014. Mayor John Tory's election platform included a major transit initiative called SmartTrack. SmartTrack is now a complication for the Province.

On the map, SmartTrack begins at the Airport Corporate Centre on Eglinton in Etobicoke, runs east to Mt.Dennis, then joins the GO Georgetown GO line to run to Union Station. It then continues eastward on the GO Lakeshore East route, taking the Stouffville branch north through Scarborough to Unionville. It would be electrified and use full-sized rolling-stock. TTC fares would apply. This 53km route, with 22 stops, would cost \$8 billion, to be paid for from increased property values as a result of the development that better transit would bring.

SmartTrack clearly duplicates GO's RER plans for Toronto, except for the extension along Eglinton west of Mt.Dennis. It is premised on the use of GO stations and track now owned by Metrolinx. Fortunately, the Province has moved to meet Tory and the city half-way. The Metrolinx RER work plan includes working with the city to determine how SmartTrack can be worked into RER.

Toronto City Council is very much part of the process of determining the future of SmartTrack. Going into negotiations with Metrolinx regarding SmartTrack and RER, in January of 2015 Council set down particular ele-

ments to be considered in the discussions with Metrolinx. To be included in the discussions: a service frequency better than 15 minutes; all-stops trains in both directions; accelerated electrification of SmartTrack; fare integration between GO and TTC; 7 additional stops east of Union Station, and 5 west of Union Station; further study of the feasibility of the SmartTrack stub west of Mt.Dennis, including further public consultation; and, finally, a strategy for sharing and financing the capital costs of RER and SmartTrack between Metrolinx and the city.

Before the Rob Ford era ended in Toronto, City Council opted to construct a new subway line in Scarborough to replace the TTC's RT line which was going to be converted to LRT. The Scarborough Subway Extension would begin at Kennedy subway station and extend some 7.6km to McCowan and Sheppard Avenues. Council even voted for a property tax increase to cover its \$910 million cost of the subway, after the Province agreed to contribute \$1.48B, with the Feds providing \$0.66B (total cost of \$3B).

Does the Scarborough Subway Extension make sense, now that SmartTrack is being planned to also serve the east side of Scarborough? Even worse, the subway extension will dump more subway riders onto the Bloor-Danforth (BD) subway line when it opens, compounding the congestion that already exists at the Bloor/Yonge station where BD riders switch to the Yonge line to continue downtown. The Downtown Relief Line subway (DRL), now in planning, is to siphon off BD riders at the Pape subway station on Toronto's east side. To the distress of many transit planners, the DRL's priority appears to be again pushed to the side with SmartTrack.

Given the Province's need to invest in RER, and the priority that SmartTrack along the Stouffville alignment now appears to have, the Scarborough subway extension, in the eyes of many transit planners, looks even more dubious as an appropriate transit investment. Objective transit studies con-

tinue to show an LRT solution for the RT offers more people and places quality transit at significantly lower cost than the subway extension alternative. TAO has also proposed "Option 3," a SmartTrack/RER branch line from the Stouffville corridor to Scarborough Town Centre and beyond that would relieve demand on the BD line and Bloor/Yonge station.

In the process of jointly planning the RER and SmartTrack, will the Province sort out an optimum transit plan for Toronto's east side rather than letting billions of dollars be spent on vanity subways? ■



University of Toronto geographers Andre Sorensen and Paul Hess have provided evidence that LRT in Scarborough has superior local development potential. Scarborough has many areas of small residential lots fronting streets behind arterial roads. That leaves the main arterial roads, used for LRT, as the likely sites of growth and development.

Regarding development prospects, LRTs on Eglinton-Morningside, Malvern, and Sheppard offer 18.4 hectares (H)/km, the SmartTrack corridor offers 12H/km, with the McCowan subway having 11.1H/km. The study found there were 18,000 jobs within walking distance of the LRTs, but less than 3,000 for the subway extension on McCowan. The LRTs would be accessible on foot to a land area of 3,147H, compared to only 332H accessible on foot to the subway extension.

The report especially singles out the merits of the Sheppard East LRT. "Sheppard LRT performs best of all the potential lines in terms of the number of residents and jobs and pedestrian network per kilometer of line, and is already approved with completed environmental assessments. It could be carrying passengers before construction starts on either of the other two proposals" (Executive Summary). (See Andre Sorensen and Paul M. Hess, "Choices for Scarborough: transit, walking, and intensification in Toronto's inner suburbs," March, 2015). ■

VIA Rail smoke and mirrors

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the media and local chambers of commerce, touting his get-well-soon plan for the bedraggled Crown rail passenger service. A ministerial chief of staff in the Mulroney era and a VIA executive under Harper, Desjardins-Siciliano wants his audiences to believe he can turn a whipped nag into a sleek thoroughbred even though his Conservative masters keep reducing the size of the feed bag.

His plan – which no one in the North American rail passenger business can quite comprehend – involves luring private investors to build VIA a whole new set of tracks in the Quebec-Windsor Corridor. This will get VIA out from under the thumb of CN and CP, dispensing with the outrageous charges they levy on the passenger trains for track access. It would also boost VIA's on-time performance, which has declined to the lowest level in its miserable 38-year history, largely due to passengers getting shunted aside for freight.

Desjardins-Siciliano envisions a freight-free VIA system capable of handling passenger trains at 175 km/h. These wouldn't be the electric bullet trains vote-hungry politicians announce before every election, but some unspecified diesel variety that would only run 15 km/h faster than VIA's current fleet. Galloping over their own tracks unencumbered by the freight trains, they would create a great sucking sound as they pulled passengers out of the skies and off the highways. VIA's current corridor ridership of 2.1 million annually would skyrocket to 7.3 million.

According to Desjardins-Siciliano, this would be the medium-fast track to VIA profitability. But he fails to note there isn't a single rail passenger system in the world that is profitable, just as there are no profitable air, highway, marine or transit systems. Some passenger railways running high-frequency service in high-density corridors show

an "above the rails" operating profit, but they rarely pay the full cost of the infrastructure they require. Nor do they cover the cost of the feeder services that bring in and distribute the necessary passenger volume.

Despite worldwide proof that passenger trains – like all other forms of transportation – require public investment in order to operate in the public interest, Desjardins-Siciliano says it would be unfair to ask his political friends in Ottawa to cough up. After all, they invested nearly \$1 billion in VIA between 2007 and 2012, so it would be unfair to ask them for several billion more.

Well, yes, but the Harper crew authorized botched projects that only applied yet more Band-Aids to the leaky, creaky VIA boat. It's now riding low in the water because successive Conservative and Liberal governments have never modernized it. We won't even get into the issue of how VIA itself was largely responsible for these projects running years over schedule and millions over budget; some still aren't complete.

Desjardins-Siciliano implies his plan is a slam dunk because he knows who will pay for it: pension and insurance funds. This is the same rabbit that too many politicians pull out of their hats when they find the public cookie jar is running a bit low and they need some fast cash. It sounds nice if you don't examine it too closely.

What Desjardins-Siciliano never discusses when he works the rubber chicken circuit is the real state of VIA today. It is, in the words of Green Party Deputy Leader Bruce Hyer, "abysmal." Hyer recently fired out a press release that ripped VIA management and their Conservative overseers from pillar to post over their ill treatment of the railway he says they fail to recognize is owned "by the people of Canada – not the Harper government."

The Thunder Bay-Superior North MP also suggested in his release that there really are a couple of ways to

start fixing VIA at no cost. The principle one is the passage of legislation to finally establish VIA's mandate, rights, obligations and relationship with the freight railways. That has been one of the keys to the slowly-blooming revival of U.S. rail passenger service under Amtrak.

Such a bill was tabled in the House of Commons last December by NDP MP Philip Toone. Full disclosure: I had a hand in writing the proposed *VIA Rail Canada Act* with the MP for Gaspésie – Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It was supported by every opposition MP and defeated by every Conservative MP.

So, the president of VIA can shill all he wants for this latest Conservative rail passenger dream scheme. It is just more smoke and mirrors, which we've gotten from every federal government since VIA was breech birthed in 1977.

The hard truth is it will take public bucks to build a rail passenger service that delivers public benefits. That investment will be recouped through improved service, reduced costs and a substantial impact on the economy, the environment and our quality of life. Every other G8 nation with which we compete knows that and is investing accordingly, as are several emerging global powerhouses.

VIA's no-cost dreamliner? Don't book your tickets just yet. ■

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TTC and Bombardier agreement on new streetcars delivery

On May 12, 2015, in an article by reporter Tess Kalinowski, the *Toronto Star* revealed some of the problems causing delay in the delivery of new streetcars to Toronto. A handful of cars are now running when there should have been 50.

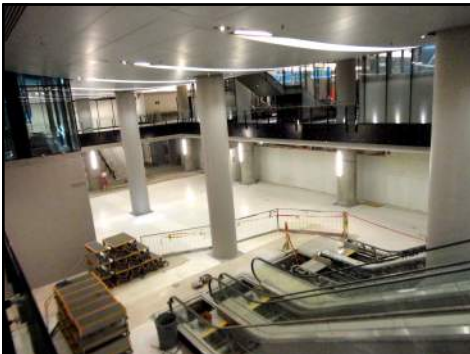
Bombardier has acknowledged problems, saying that it has now re-tooled its Mexican plant that supplies parts for assembly in Thunder Bay. Production at Thunder Bay is to be ramped up, and new quality controls implemented in cooperation with TTC engineers. ■

Union Station News

York GO Concourse opened at Union Station

Key elements of the revitalization of Toronto's Union Station are being completed. On Monday, April 27, Metrolinx opened its new west side York Street Concourse. At the present time, the main access to GO commuter trains has been through the east side Bay Street Concourse. Once the July Pan Am Games are completed, the Bay Concourse will be closed and completely rebuilt, including adding the retail level below, a project that will be completed in 2017.

The photo below shows a portion of the York Concourse north of the ticket counter area shown on Page 1. The new concourse areas will extend



southward all the way under the station's tracks. There will be stairs, escalators and elevators to all tracks. The photo shows an area of the York Concourse open to the escalators and stairs down to the retail level. Note, in the upper left corner of the picture, one of the elevators from the concourse level to a pair of tracks above.

The next photo below is taken outside at today's Bay Concourse on the north, looking east. The Union Station subway station entrance is shown. The TTC's rebuilding of this station is almost complete. TTC patrons leave that station and then climb steps to the Bay Concourse. When the new Bay Concourse is finished, TTC patrons will have no steps to climb, but will walk directly



into Union Station at the retail level. They will access GO's two concourses, and the VIA Rail concourse between them, from the retail level. In 2017, the GO concourse area will triple in size. The concourses and the retail level will be connected to the PATH system on the north, and have exits on the south side connecting to the Air Canada Centre and buildings on Bremner Blvd.

Union Station revitalization was to have been completed in 2015. ■

Union Pearson Express to open June 6

Express rail service between Toronto's Union Station and Terminal 1 at Pearson International Airport (with people mover to Terminal 3) is scheduled to open Saturday, June 6. The entrance to the service at Union Station is off the Skywalk on the west side of Union Station. UP Express is a division of Metrolinx. The cost of the project is indicated to be \$456 million.

Much advanced publicity has been put out on the new service. The 23.3km line has two intermediate stops, at Bloor Street (subway connectin), and in Weston. The trains are two or three self-propelled diesel cars each holding 60 passengers. There are separate fares for adults, students, seniors, children and families (2 adults and up to 3 children under age 18), with a discount for Presto card holders (except for the family fare). The adult one-way fare is \$27.50 (\$19 with Presto), \$55 for a family. Airport employees can ride for \$10 per trip or buy a monthly pass

for \$300. Other volume based fares may be implemented in the future. A two-stop non-Pearson trip for an adult is \$15.20, \$11.40 for a one stop trip.

The 15 minute frequency and a 25 minute ride are designed to appeal to people as a certainty, in contrast to the vagaries of driving.

Two videos on the internet are worth viewing regarding the UP Express. The first is a Metrolinx video of the spur (3km) from the airport to the Kitchener corridor. Most of the spur line is on a viaduct at one place 28m off the ground giving stunning views the airport and the city. Go to: <http://www.upexpress.com/en/news/videos.aspx> and select Union Pearson Express - The Spur.

The second video is a Global News helicopter ride using timelapse photography to show the complete trip of a trial run from Union Station to Terminal 1. It can be found at: <http://globalnews.ca/video/1954435/timelapse-shows-union-pearson-express-train-reach-airport-in-3-minutes/>. ■

U.S.A. News

Amtrak wins in Supreme Court decision

Since its creation in 1971, Amtrak, the U.S. government-supported passenger railroad, has benefited from a legislated requirement that U.S. railways give priority to Amtrak passenger trains using their rails. Acting through their industry association, the Association of American Railroads (AAR), Amtrak was taken to court in 2010 by the AAR, claiming that Amtrak is a private corporation and it doesn't have the constitutional right to require train priority on the tracks of private freight railroads. Amtrak was incorporated in the District of Columbia.

While Amtrak won its case in a lower court, this decision was reversed in an appellate court in 2013. Appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, on March 9 this court unanimously sided with the lower court, ruling that Amtrak is not a

for-profit private company but is effectively a government agency and can, therefore, properly have rights to priority on the private railways.

The Supreme Court returned the case to the appellate court to rule on other matters. Amtrak is not entirely out of the woods, as there may be an issue of whether or not arbitration procedures in Amtrak legislation have been properly constituted.

This case has complexity that could not be dealt with here. Readers are referred to two articles in *Railway Age* magazine by Frank N. Wilner, contributing editor, dated March 10, 2015, and February 26, 2015.

Observers agree that the success in slowly building a market for passenger rail has hinged on legislation that sets out Amtrak's mandate and the corresponding responsibilities of freight railroads in hosting Amtrak passenger trains. This arrangement goes back to Amtrak's creation when the freight railroads were relieved of all obligations to provide passenger service as common carriers at their cost. While run as a business, no segment of Amtrak's operation is profitable and Amtrak has required annual contributions to capital and operating costs by the federal government in the public interest and for its social benefits. In Canada, there is no legislation that gives VIA Rail legal rights and obligations similar to those that Amtrak has, legislation that Transport Action has long advocated. ■

Algoma Update

The Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains reports that the Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corporation is working out detailed agreements between Sault Ste. Marie and Transport Canada, and between the Sault and Railmark, the operator selected to run the Algoma Central's passenger trains for the next 3 years.

Meanwhile, the Sault-Hearst passenger train is running on the same schedule as usual: northbound on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and southbound on Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays. ■

Ottawa News

In the Ottawa area, there were a number of developments in the last few months. The Alstom Coradia diesel trainsets are now operating on the Trillium O-Train line, replacing the mothballed Talents. Since four trains are now operating rather than two on the single track line, end-to-end travel time is a few minutes longer than it used to be, as trains must slow down for meets on the two new passing sidings. Frequency has improved from 15 minute to 12 minute headways, but the cycle time for each trainset has increased from 16 to 24 minutes. Track and signal upgrading and the six new cars for the O-Train line came to \$60 million.

The new trains only have 70% of the capacity of the old ones so, in spite of increased frequency, overall carrying capacity is about the same. The switch to the somewhat smaller Coradia cars was necessary as Bombardier, manufacturer of the Talents, no longer builds this car with diesel engines.

Given the increased cycle time, Capital Railway, operator of the line under contract, has admitted that the target 8-minute frequency will never be achieved; they are finally looking at two-car operation for increased capacity after 2018, requiring extending station platforms and more cars. (This has been the recommendation of Transport Action for some time.)

The O-Train line serves major employment centres and Carleton University. Ridership keeps growing. Additional stations could be added at Gladstone and Walkley to encourage land use intensification in those areas. Also, the airport has helped fund a study to extend the line with a spur to the terminus building.

Is Ottawa suffering from trains to the airport envy, now that Toronto and Vancouver have them? In the more distant future, full double tracking, electrification, and suburban extension further south is possible. A challenge would be taking the LRT catenary wire over the railway branch line to the

south end of the National Research Council test facility.

Across the Ottawa River, it looks like the steam train operation that served Wakefield until 2011 will be shifted to Montebello after the three cities that own the track opted for the new destination, to be in operation by 2017. A run from Hull/Gatineau seems to be too long, so the starting point may be Plaisance to the East of Gatineau. That would enable a 90 minute run. It may also attract more Montreal users. The costs of fixing the washouts on the picturesque Wakefield run appears to be too great and the future of the remaining track is therefore dim.

Returning to Ottawa, construction is on time for the downtown LRT tunnel and station caverns. Agreements have been reached with adjacent property owners at all three downtown Ottawa stations for direct entrances via their buildings, meaning that Ottawa's narrow sidewalks will not be obstructed by entries when the line opens in 2018.

In the west end, after 100 days of intense negotiations initiated by the federal government, agreement has been reached between the city and the National Capital Commission to build a stretch of the Phase 2 LRT extension along the Ottawa riverside. The Parkway will be partially relocated on top of the trenched LRT, freeing up more natural riverfront. Preliminary planning for the route, splitting at Lincoln Fields, and terminating at Baseline and Bayshore, is into public consultation. In the east, the route to Orleans is straightforward and not controversial. If all goes well and funding is available, construction could begin in 2018.

VIA rail is commencing construction of a new passing siding near the Wass Junction area (Riverside Drive/Revelstoke) this summer. There are still occasional crossing signal malfunctions along the VIA line, but grade separation of all of them would be very expensive. However, VIA Rail is constructing a grade separation over the busy Greenbank Road in Barrhaven. ■

-- Bernie Geiger



Ottawa O-Train south of Carleton University (Photo: Tim Lane). In the Jan.-Feb. 2015 *Ontario Report*, this rolling stock was mis-named. It is a diesel-powered Alstom Coradia LINT trainset.

Bert Titcomb remembered

Long-serving Transport Action Canada volunteer, Bert Titcomb, died peacefully May 13, 2015, after a heart attack on May 3. He was 81. Bert grew up in Quebec's Eastern Townships, was a graduate of Stanstead College (1951), and obtained a mechanical engineering degree from McGill University in Montreal.



Bert's professional carrier spanned 40 years. He worked in private industry in Switzerland, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Quebec. He moved to Ottawa to enter the federal public service in 1985, retiring in 1996.

Bert loved the outdoors, was for many years an active member of the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, and an avid tennis player. He had a keen interest in railways, was a member of the Bytown Railway Society, and had recently joined the Ottawa Railway History Circle.

After retiring, Bert became an indispensable volunteer at Transport Action (formerly call Transport 2000 Canada), being corporate secretary until 2006, newsletter editor 1998-2007, and national office manager. He also served on the board of Canadians for Responsible and Safe Highways (CRASH).

Transport Action Ontario extends its condolences to his family. Bert is survived by his wife and three sons. His knowledge, optimism and energy will be missed. ■

TAO Activities/Events

...from the TAO website

Network Southwest Public Forum St. Thomas, May 27

St. Thomas will host a public forum presenting the *Network Southwest Passenger Rail and Bus Service Action Plan*, our plan for rapid solutions to Southwestern Ontario's transportation challenges. The keynote presenter is transportation analyst and government policy advisor Greg Gormick. The event will take place from 7:00-9:00 p.m. at the Canada Southern Railway Station, 750 Talbot Street, St. Thomas.

SWOTA presentation to Southwestern Ontario Economic Alliance

TAO is part of the Southwestern Ontario Transportation Alliance (SWOTA). In the past, SWOTA has worked closely with the Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) to improve public transportation in the region. SWEA is a coalition of public sector, private sector, and non-government organizations founded to advocate improved conditions for economic vitality in the region. SWEA is now in the process of re-evaluating its mission and activities.

Improved public transportation remains a focus for SWEA. SWOTA president Terry Johnson and TAO president Peter Miasek are to present a summary of our *Network Southwest* plan at SWEA's board meeting on May 14. The presentation can be viewed on the TAO website.

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. Photos by the editor unless otherwise indicated.

Thanks to all who helped out with this issue including the volunteers at the National Office in Ottawa. News to May 13, 2015.

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Submission on reconfiguring Toronto's Gardiner Expressway

TAO has been participating as a member of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) in the consultations for the Gardiner East EA since its inception in 2009. TAO has supported the "Remove" option. Subsequently, Council directed staff to consider a new "Hybrid" option.

During the past year, the SAC met to review new data. The matter came before the Public Works Committee on May 13, and will go to Council in June.

TAO's updated paper concluded that the "Hybrid" option is not appreciably different than the "Maintain" option. A reconfiguration of the urban boulevard in "Remove" has reduced the auto and truck travel time penalty to only 3 to 5 minutes. Therefore, TAO continues to urge adoption of the "Remove" option. ■

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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: 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.