



Ontario Report

Transport Action Ontario



The recovery of VIA Rail in SW Ontario, the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal Triangle, and in the rest of Canada depends on a new fleet of high capacity rail passenger cars. This bi-level Amtrak train is today's best example. The March 2013 photo by Jack Snell shows a Capitol Corridor train at Martinez, CA, with a cab/coach/baggage/bike car in the lead, locomotive in the rear (out of sight). Cab cars permit bi-directional service without turning the whole train at its terminals.

Securing VIA's future

VIA Rail 1-4-10 Plan sets a new course for passenger rail in Canada

The indicators of VIA's decline have been extensively chronicled in the pages of Transport Action Ontario's newsletter: increasingly delayed trains, an obsolete and expensive fleet, and service cuts that are destroying it as a network.

Believing that the coming federal election can be a turning point for passenger rail in Canada, Transport Action Canada and its affiliates in the Atlantic region, Ontario, the Prairies, and British Columbia asked noted rail consultant Greg Gormick to examine how Canada could implement a national rail passenger strategy so to meet the mobility needs of the 21st century.

The result is the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan*. It calls for a top-to-bottom overhaul of VIA, including a 10-year, \$5-billion capital investment program that would have benefits

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FROM THE PRESIDENT - PETER MIASEK

Comparing election platforms of Canada's major political parties



The federal election campaign is in full swing leading to election day October 19. Campaigns are unpredictable – who would have thought that the Syrian refugee crisis and the wearing of a niqab face covering at citizen ceremonies would become top issues? Although we were initially hopeful, some of the issues important to Transport Action Ontario (TAO), such as public transit, intercity passenger rail and climate change, have been little discussed publically or in the media.

To better understand the platforms of the three major parties, I did a website and public domain search on these three topics. The Conservatives seem to have no "platform" on their website, apparently are relying on their record and their Budget 2015. The Liberal platform is easy to find on their website, as they have produced background papers on key topics. The NDP seems to provide only very high level summaries of their plans.

Public Transit

The Conservative 2015 Budget set up a new dedicated, ongoing Public Transit Fund which will ramp up by

2019-2020 to \$1B/yr for major transit projects that are procured using a P3 approach. This money is over and above the new \$14B announced for general infrastructure in the 10-year New Building Canada Fund. Transit project selection will be based on "merit." In the past few months, support at the 1/3 level for four projects has been announced: Toronto's SmartTrack (\$2.6B), Calgary Green Line LRT (\$1.5B), Ottawa Stage 2 LRT (\$1.0B) and Surrey, BC LRT (\$0.7B).

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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The Liberal plan is laid out in a well-written backgrounder called “Moving Communities Forward: Investing in Public Transit.” It discusses the importance of public transit and commits to “quadruple federal investment in public transit over the next decade by investing almost \$20 billion more,” over and above the Budget 2015 Public Transit Fund. The funding will be flexible to municipal priorities and requirements. “The plan will allow the existing New Building Canada Fund to focus more on other parts of Canada’s vital transportation system, such as roads and bridges.” Based on the above statements, it seems that the Liberals are promising to be investing about \$3B/yr in transit by the end of the decade.

The NDP has released their 20-year Better Transit Plan where “by the end of their first term, \$1.3B will flow predictably, transparently each and every year to municipalities across the country. Municipalities will be able to plan long-term with dedicated revenue to fund their projects.” In addition, they will increase the transfer of federal gas tax to municipalities to be spent on infrastructure priorities, including transit, ramping up to \$1.5B/yr after 4 years.

In my view, all three party commitments are a step forward from today’s situation, where Canada is the only G8 country without a coordinated federal framework of policies and programs for transit funding (i.e. a National Transit Strategy). However, the Conservative approach still seems to be based on a project-by-project approval, which is unpredictable, open to political manipulation, and does not allow for long-term planning. The other two parties appear to leave prioritization to local government, which is preferable.

The three parties can also be compared as to the quantum of federal funding. Assuming the funds are on average divided equally among Canada’s major

metropolitan areas, approximately 30% should flow to major transit projects in the GTHA. Recognizing that total costs to construct and operate *The Big Move* is about \$3B/yr, only the Liberal plan comes close to the one-third recommended by transit experts such as Metrolinx and the Transit Investment Strategy Advisory Panel.

The Conservative requirement that eligible projects must use P3 procurement could also be a problem. Although both Ontario and the federal governments support P3s, it is acknowledged that not all major projects are suitable for P3s. An example would be the Eglinton LRT tunnel project. The P3 constraint is an unnecessary handcuff on using this fund.

Inter-City Passenger Rail

In contrast to public transit, all three major party platforms are silent on intercity passenger rail (VIA Rail Canada). We know that budgets under the Conservative government have subsidized VIA at about \$400M/yr (operating + capital) in 2013 and 2014, declining from \$530M in 2010.

Transport Action Canada and its regional affiliates including TAO have run numerous campaigns to increase the profile of intercity passenger rail such as National Dream Renewed, Network Southwest, and VIA 1-4-10 (pending). Neither the Liberals nor NDP have picked up on this issue, other than at a local level. (Although not part of this column, we note that the Green Party platform commits to increased investment for VIA Rail - \$600M in 2016/2017, increasing to \$764M by 2020.) All we can do is keep pushing the issue with the new government.

Climate Change

After the economy, Canadians rank the environment and climate change as their second highest concern. A key milestone is the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in November.

By all accounts, the Conservative record on climate change has been very

poor. Canada was awarded the “Fossil of the Year” award by the Climate Action Network for five consecutive years between 2007 and 2011, before receiving the “Lifetime Underachievement Fossil Award” in 2013. The Conservative approach has been sector-by-sector regulation. Regulations have been passed in the transportation sector, electricity sector, renewable fuels and HFCs. However, the key regulations on the oil and gas sector have been delayed many times. The Conservatives are quick to take credit for provincial initiatives, such as Ontario’s phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation, although they were unsupportive at the time and now criticize Ontario’s electricity costs.

The Liberal platform is outlined in their backgrounder “A New Plan for Canada’s Environment and Economy.” They will work with the provinces to develop national emissions reduction targets, provide targeted funding to help achieve these goals, fulfill Canada’s G20 commitment to phase out subsidies for the fossil fuel industry (e.g. restrict use of the Canada Exploration Expense tax deduction), work on climate resilience and invest in clean technologies.

The NDP platform is provided in a video by Tom Mulcair released in late September. After acknowledging the problem and accurately criticizing both the Conservatives and Liberals, he indicates that the NDP will put a “price on carbon and reduce emissions to hit national targets.” The NDP will set up a “pan-Canadian cap and trade system, with hard limits for Canada’s biggest polluters,” and include “equivalency” for any province’s approach that is working well. The NDP will eliminate subsidies to the fossil fuel industry and invest in clean technology. In an interview on CBC’s “The Current” on September 28, it was stated that the NDP target is 34% GHG reduction below 1990 levels by 2025/30. The NDP has criticized the Conservatives for weak targets and the Liberals for having no targets in place in time for Paris. ■

VIA Rail 1-4-10 Plan

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nationwide. To put this substantial investment in context, consider that the proposed Highway 413 between Vaughan and Guelph is estimated at \$3.8 billion, the Gordie Howe International Bridge and related highway expansion will cost at least \$2.2 billion, and the modernization of Pearson International Airport in the 1990s cost about \$6 billion.

Also crucial to the plan is a *VIA Rail Canada Act* that will legally define VIA's Basic National Network and legislate the financial and operational terms for access to the freight railways' lines. The report sets out what can be realistically achieved in one, four and 10 years to produce a sustainable and larger system by 2025. This staged recovery will be necessary because it will take four years before the first new cars and locomotives will begin arriving. The impact of all these measures will be a steep reduction in VIA's annual operating costs, as well as a dramatic improvement in the product it offers travellers.

The *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* is non-partisan, but it recognizes that VIA's future is dependent on political will and action. It requires the next federal government to take two overdue steps. The first is to commit to a national rail passenger system that requires public investment to thrive. The second step is engagement with the provinces to link their public transportation needs with a revived VIA, and for some services to be jointly supported.

The *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* does not reinvent the wheel. Rather, it draws on best practices found elsewhere, especially in the U.S. It draws heavily on Amtrak's experience: how it was originally constituted, its legislative framework, its equipment planning, its route structure (including both corridor and long-distance trains), feeder bus links, and its successful working relationships with state and local governments.

The report underscores two key problems with VIA today: the high cost of its obsolete fleet and the fact that the corporation doesn't have a practical vision. Off-the-cuff "plans" for some future increases in frequency here and there are entirely inadequate, with VIA's dedicated track proposal for the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal Triangle being a key example.

The alternate vision is most startlingly revealed in a comparison made in the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* between Amtrak's *Empire Builder* and VIA's *Canadian*. Running similar distances and facing comparable geographic, climatic and demographic conditions, the daily *Builder* attracts five times the riders as the limping and less frequent *Canadian*, yet the cost to operate it is much the same. What? How and why has this happened? Read about it in the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan*.

Readers may be surprised that this plan is so comprehensive. It is well thought out and has the detail to make it convincing. Gormick was able to achieve this feat through access to long-forgotten and government-trashed reports done in 1984-85 by the Rail Passenger Action Force (RPAF). Created by the then-new Conservative government, the RPAF engaged in a thorough review of VIA's past and how it had been undermined by previous governments, and then developed a detailed alternate path to a robust future as a modern, Canada-wide rail passenger system. The new government then turned on the RPAF, shut it down, and continued on the path of interference and neglect that has brought VIA to the brink today.

Based on the U.S. experience, the RPAF called for VIA to be re-equipped with bi-level rolling stock and the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* follows this recommendation. It calls for high-performance bi-levels based on Amtrak's *Superliners* and California's corridor bi-levels (see front page and this page photos). Corridor and regional trains composed of these cars would be bi-directional so they could be quickly reversed at their

terminals without being wyeed or looped. Consisting of three to six cars, these trains would offer ample extra capacity with the same crewing that VIA now uses on trains of many fewer seats. This will vastly increase efficiency, cost recovery and revenue. The use of such cars is not on VIA's current agenda, as far as can be determined.

With a federal election campaign in full swing, the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* is especially timely. While transportation has not been a central issue in federal campaigns for many years, this one is a bit different because of the 2012 cuts to VIA and the regional impact of its continuing decline. This has become an issue in a number of ridings in Southwestern Ontario, Northern New Brunswick and on Vancouver Island. The *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* offers voters solid information on how VIA's current situation can be remedied by a new government that is committed to improved rail passenger service.

A notable associate of Transport Action is adding to this effort to make voters realize the future of VIA will be in their hands on October 19. Save-VIA, the citizens' advocacy group in St. Marys, Ontario, is conducting a campaign to urge voters to ask their candidates a simple question at the door and at public meetings: "If elected, what will you and your party do to revitalize VIA as a sustainable, nationwide transportation service?"

The launch of the *VIA 1-4-10 Plan* is forthcoming. Please watch the TAO website regarding related events (see bottom of page for website link). ■



Amtrak Superliner sleeping car. Photo: Derek Pinsonat, March 2001.

Meet board member Scott St. John

Scott St. John was elected to the TAO board at our April 25, 2015 AGM in Toronto. He has been a rail and transit advocate for many years. Scott grew up in London, Ontario. For most of his high school years, he studied violin at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, then began his career as a musician. Scott taught violin as a professor at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music from 1999 to 2006. In 2006 he joined the St. Lawrence String Quartet which was in residence at Stanford University in California. SLSQ was noted for its repertoire of modern chamber music. Scott remained with SLSQ until 2013. In 2014 he returned to London where his wife Sharon Wei, a violist, had taken up a position at the music faculty of the University of Western Ontario. Outside of their teaching, both Scott and Sharon remain active as professional musicians.

Scott pinpoints the start of his interest in rail and transit to when he was 10 years old. His family lived in France for a year at Meulan-en-Yvelines, a distant suburb northwest of Paris. He and family members often took the train to and from Paris Gare Saint-Lazare, using the Paris Métro to see the sights of this great city. In his many years as a professional musician, Scott has had the chance to travel throughout North America and to visit Europe and Asia. This gave him the opportunity to observe and experience a multitude of cities and their transit systems, as well as to use intercity trains between urban centres. Recently, on a visit to Hong Kong, he traveled by fast electric train from the airport to Hong Kong island with the airport trains being an extension of the subway system. Hong Kong is remark-



able for its integrated transit system. It employs the Octopus contactless stored-value fare card, also good at retail stores, fast food restaurants and parking meters. This fare card, dating back to 1997, is intuitive and highly successful with the result that Hong Kong's card has been the model system for the world.

Back home, Scott organized the Network Southwest Plan town hall meeting in London, and he is very interested in the city's SHIFT project to plan a rapid transit system of the future. He participates in SWOTA meetings on behalf of TAO, and has represented TAO at conferences. He brings a wealth of first-hand knowledge and enthusiasm to TAO's board for which we are very grateful. ■

Technology

Symposium on the future of the car: a report

With Uber and Google in the news recently with developments in transportation technology, I was very curious to attend a conference entitled "Transport Futures: The Future of the Car," presented by Healthy Transport Consulting at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Toronto on September 17.

Ontario's Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca gave the opening speech. A solid speaker, he gave an overview of Ontario's current investments: \$22 billion since 2003 for transit-related projects, and \$31.5 billion additional for the current "Moving Ontario Forward" program. He seemed to be trying to walk a fine line between transit and private car investments, saying he is not planning a "war on the car," though they are committed to implementing "HOT" toll lanes similar to Los Angeles.

Del Duca explained that Michigan and New York states are considering driverless car regulation, and Ontario should lead more strongly in this area. A question about Ontario's high-speed rail plan was answered vaguely, with Del Duca responding that the environmental assessment alone will take four to six years.

Urban design was the focus of speaker Kit Krinkel McCullough (University of Michigan), who gave a wonderful talk about the shared mobility ecosystem. Then came the fireworks. Uber Canada's Ian Black shared the stage with Beck Taxi's Kristine Hubbard, and significant tension arose quickly between them. Uber's presentation was very much like their smartphone app: smooth, easy and attractive. Graphs showed the impressive growth rate of Uber's services, and it was interesting to hear about their new "Uber-pool" carpool service which is now accounting for 50% of the rides they provide in San Francisco. Beck Taxi was very focused on their own safety record and need to serve handicapped and internet-challenged riders. The other fascinating person on this panel was Prem Gururajan, who has created a start-up ride sharing service in Milton, Ontario. His "RideCo" service connects riders to the Milton GO Station, and is supported by Metrolinx. It's an impressive way for commuters to use rail and get the "last mile" to their house seamlessly.

After lunch, the topic moved to the driverless car, or "road vehicle automation." Dr. Steven Shladover, from University of California (Berkeley), gave an illuminating and humorous look at fact and fiction in this field. Everyone is salivating over the futuristic possibilities, but Dr. Shladover thinks we should put on the brakes and proceed very cautiously. While speed harmonization and/or clusters of connected vehicles may be possible in the near future, he believes that real driverless cars like Google's example are 50 to 60 years away from reality. Technology is simply not reliable enough to account for the myriad of conditions that real drivers face on a daily basis.

My take on the day? Ride-sharing, car-sharing and less cars overall, combined with convenient transit connections, are the real future of the car. ■

- Scott St. John, London, Ontario



Editorial comment: Expanding computer power is manifesting itself in the quest to automate the driving of vehicles, both cars and trucks. Research is underway at auto-makers, university labs and, famously, Google. Different levels of automation are possible. Bust isn't there a bigger picture here?

Considering that engineering is not always perfect, skeptics ask how robotic cars might transform streetlife. Urban planners have worked hard to advance the cause of "complete streets." This is a movement to insure that streets well serve the needs of pedestrians and cyclists as well as cars, and to do so with trees, shrubs and flower patches in such spaces. Will robotic cars really cope with the normal chaos of streets with people (including children) literally mixed in with parked and moving vehicles? If the robots win out, they may take back the streets. It would be done by turning streets into guideways for robotic vehicles only in the name of safety (read speed), turning the clock back on complete streets. We could end up with special intercity highways for robotic trucks which would encourage the use of high carbon emitting trucking to move freight rather than using much greener container freight moved by rail. The editor is just wondering.

Consider yet another transportation alternative, illustrated by TAO Board member Avrum Regenstreif that follows below.

Environmentally sustainable transport at a community scale: report on electric vehicle use at some Mexican resorts

by Avrum Regenstreif, PhD

Resorts in at least four Mexican states demonstrate that sustainable electric vehicles can serve most internal transportation needs of such facilities. On land areas similar to typical residential neighborhoods in much of North America, some Mexican resorts are using innovative battery-powered electric vehicles rather than internal combustion vehicles (ICVs) for convenient, energy efficient, local transport. A good example is found within the municipality of Nuevo Vallarta, state of Nayarit. Situated ten kilometers west of the Puerto Vallarta International Airport, this flagship complex of the various resorts owned and operated by the Vidanta Group in Mexico comprises six levels of resort ownership. It extends inland along the



banks of the Ameca River, a boundary between Nayarit and Jalisco, and also extends at least two kilometers north of the Ameca estuary inland from extensive ocean beachfront edging Banderas Bay, the largest bay on Mexico's Pacific coast (Photo 1).

The complex comprises more than 13 high rise residential buildings and facilities, including a number of condos, at least one hotel, numerous time-share or fractional ownership residential buildings, and extensive recreational facilities. Encompassing more than 5.0 sq km, only 3.5 sq km of which is currently developed, the site includes extensive beaches



and ocean-front recreation, numerous swimming pools, many tennis courts, two golf courses and a golf school, two wave pools, a water slide, many children's wading pools, energy efficient heat recycling fountains (Photo 2), several man-made lakes, rivers and canals, a large parking area, a multi-story parking garage including staff service facilities, numerous in-pool bars, restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues, as well as fitness spas, or similar health facilities related to each resort. Weaving together these diverse elements is an electric vehicle (EV) ground transport system, site security, building and grounds maintenance, supervised parking, administration and sales, and a wide range of diverse social and recreation programs and amenities. Estimated usage of this complex ranges from 5,000 to over 20,000 guests per week, depending on time of year.

Originally, the resort was auto-dependent. Accidents, congestion, noise, and vehicle pollution from tour buses, cars, motorcycles, staff and contractor's vehicles, taxis, and trucks, accessing all buildings resulted in intolerable conflicts. Over the past five years, traffic circulation was reorganized and types of vehicles

permitted on site restricted, so that such problems are now significantly reduced.

Influenced by modern golf cart technologies, the resort has acquired more than 500 battery-powered EVs, including unpowered, detachable trailers, as well as new versions of golf carts, resulting in clean silent efficient,



freight and passenger rolling stock. Now, either three-car trains, 11-passenger electric vans, or smaller EVs, move all resort staff, supplies, baggage maintenance equipment, and food and beverage deliveries to and from various site locations (Photo 3). ICVs are now gone from the internal roads, paths and building entries.

Arriving guests, visitors, staff and contractors leave their ICVs at designated parking drop-off areas or at the central garage. Everyone either walks or rides on EVs within the site's internal pathways. Eleven-passenger electric vans, or van trains with unpowered trailers silently move guests, staff or luggage between buildings and ICV parking areas (Photo 4). While all passenger vehicles are driven by



trained resort staff, golf carts may be driven by resident guests to and from as well as on the golf courses (Photo 5).

Guests with disabilities, with a few minutes' notice, can order up a ramp-wheelchair transport vehicle which can carry one or two wheelchairs, together with ambulant



passengers, to or from any site location (Photo 6). Resort buildings meet international accessibility standards, including use of electric scooters by disabled persons.



When required a transport vehicle can directly access the ground floor of residential buildings for pickup at an elevator lobby in 3-5 minutes (Photo 7).

All on-site EVs or trains are comfortable, clean, quiet, and reasonably fast, consuming no fossil fuels, directly. On-site speeds are limited to a maximum of 25 km/hr on main EV routes. In inclement weather, passengers or staff travelling on individual vehicles or trains are protected from wind and rain by transparent screens which can rapidly roll down from canopies around the roofs of powered vehicles or trailer units.

EVs have sufficient battery-stored energy to operate continuously for up to eight hours. At the end of each shift, vehicles are driven to the central garage and plugged in for recharge using less costly overnight energy. Similarly, golf carts are recharged after each day's use. For extra strength requirements such as vehicle towing, the central garage has several heavy-duty, lithium battery-powered tractors capable of towing up to five tonnes. These tractors can tow any resort EV or train of vehicles as well as ICVs originating off-site which might have broken down on approaches to the resort.

Other special service vehicles in the resort's EV fleet include: a road cleaning and sweeping machine; security vehicles with flashing blue and red lights which resemble off-site police vehicles which patrol roads and public beaches; and EV mini-delivery trucks which resupply the resort's food and beverage stocks at bars, restaurants and food shops. There are also EV tractor-trailer cargo trains which pick up or deliver guest luggage to or from residential units or meet ICV delivery vans or trucks at the central parking area (Photo 8). EV cargo trains also take laundry to or from various buildings, including clean or soiled towels to and from guest service kiosks near swimming pools and beach areas. In a number of

locations, service staff serving food and drinks use two-wheel electric Segways with large tires to travel on beach sand. Security staff and life guards also use these vehicles to access emergency equipment on all beaches.

Given the distances encompassed by the complex, the present 25km/hr speed limit enables driving the entire internal vehicle network, including all secondary paths, in less than half-an-hour. For pedestrian safety, EV paths and pedestrian walkways are horizontally or vertically separated, often with pedestrians carried on bridges above vehicle routes. All on-site transport is free. One-way transport to many attractive locations provides an inducement to enjoy walking back along protected pedestrian pathways through lovely gardens and well-lit treed areas. Access to other resorts, tours, or destinations outside the complex are facilitated from the resort's parking areas where the internal EV system meets ICVs, including cars, transit buses, and taxis.

This comprehensive, sustainable ground transport system offers a practical demonstration of a prototypical residential multifunction community with its own independent internal ground transport without use of ICVs. To generalize, we know that transportation needs are high in most moderately dense communities. Directed away from cars, that demand is often sufficient to sustain a community-wide network of frequent EV-equivalent small bus or train-like vehicles carrying people between diverse pick-up points and negotiated destinations or on fixed access routes. Operational costs of such systems are not prohibitive. The major benefits are environmental: reduced dependence on fossil fuels, cleaner air, less noise, greater personal safety, with the availability of access to conventional forms of transport for external travel, whenever required. Walking and cycling can also be encouraged by increased access to improved pedestrian and bike paths. ■

About the author: Avrum is a member of TAO's board. He has been an owner-member of Mayan Resorts (now Grupo Vidanta) for the past ten years, and has witnessed the transition of the Nuevo Vallarta resort complex from high ICV dependence to its present internal car-free status. He is a retired architect and urban planner, and holds a doctorate in energy efficiency.

London Transit News

London, Ontario is planning rapid transit, stemming from its 2013 transportation master plan. "Shift - moving London forward" was launched in 2015 as part of the environmental assessment process. Some 6,500 Londoners have provided feedback to the city through community, business, and public events.

Shift started with a variety of corridor segments across the city. These were winnowed down to two routes forming a cross. People familiar with London won't be surprised that the preferred routes are east-west along Oxford St. dipping down to Dundas St. through the city's centre, and the north-south route using Wellington St./Rd. in the south, and Richmond St. and then Western Rd. in the north.

Residents have been presented with two technologies, bus rapid transit, and light rail transit.

The City has set aside \$100 million for the implementation of RT and will work to obtain funding from the province and the feds. By the end of this year, Shift will have determined its preferred alignment and choice of technology. ■

Hamilton Light Rail

On May 26 Premier Kathleen Wynne announced up to \$1 billion for the capital costs of Hamilton's Line-B LRT. Delayed since 2010, Hamilton's new mayor Fred Eisenberger, working behind the scenes, finally brokered a deal with the Province. The real winners are the many residents who backed the project long advocated by the citizen group Hamilton Light Rail. The Province did extract a change to the plan. Beginning at McMaster University in the west, the route will travel through downtown Hamilton to Queenston traffic circle, with a branch to the new GO rail station at James Street North. The original plan called for an eastern terminus at Eastgate Square. Long desired Centennial GO station in Hamilton's east end is also funded. ■



Digging out underground LRT station in Ottawa. Photo: Rideau Transit Group.

Ottawa Transit News

Confederation Line

Good progress is being made on construction by the LRT consortium with scheduled opening in spring 2018. All three deep downtown stations are being excavated from underneath, minimizing surface disruption. At least half of the tunnel distance has been mined. The three on-line stations also still require a significant volume of limestone bedrock to be removed.

The Belfast maintenance building is closed in, tracks are being laid and Alstom Citadis components are now arriving from Hornell, NY and elsewhere for final assembly. Much of the eastern bus Transitway has been closed and preparations are underway for a new roadbed, stations and some re-alignment. Until the LRT opens, buses are being run on new dedicated lanes the Province has built as a part of widening the eastern Queensway/Highway 417. Labour Day saw a temporary move of Hurdman Station at the north end of the Southeast Transitway. While there were enormous backups and delays the first morning of regular operations, after adjustments, the next day service returned to near normal levels. The next disruptions will come when the Transitway closes from Hurdman to downtown and buses must be rerouted to the Queensway and Nicholas ramps.

In the west end Scott and Albert streets are being enhanced to cope with the flow of buses while the Tunney's Pasture to downtown portion of the western Transitway is converted to rail.

Hopefully it is short-term pain for long-term gain as Albert and Slater streets are at maximum bus capacity. The LRT under Queen and Rideau streets will remove all but a few local bus routes from Ottawa's downtown core once it opens.

Trillium Line/O-Train

In operation since 2001, the line saw the addition of two passing tracks, a new signalling system, and the purchase of six new Alstom Coradia LINT diesel light rail trains to replace the original three Bombardier Talent trains, one which has not been operational since a derailment two years ago. While the new trains are smaller and have less capacity than the Talents, a capacity increase was expected because a higher frequency was planned. It hasn't worked out that way. Trains are overflowing at peak hours when Carleton University is in session. Two trains used to operate every 15 minutes with an end-to-end run time of 12 minutes. Now four trains operate, but because of siding length issues, signalling delays and loading time constraints, the end-to-end running time has increased to over 15 minutes with frequency improved to only approximately every 10 minutes. No fixed schedule is being maintained. Accordingly, there is just a minimal increase in capacity and running times are slower, although frequency has increased slightly from before. To meet growing demand in the future, it may be necessary to lengthen the station platforms and run double trainsets.

Phase 2 LRT Planning

Good progress has been made on Phase 1 of the Confederation Line LRT. Given the length of time it takes to plan, carry out environmental assessments and get funding promises from other levels of government, planning has begun to extend the LRT line to the west and southwest, and east (Orleans). The Trillium Line would be extended south with a spur to the Airport. The east-west extensions will be electric LRT and construction could begin as Phase 1 opens in 2018. The north-south

line extensions remain to be seen, especially given the recent diesel Coradia purchases. Electrifying that line would involve double-tracking the route's tunnel, rock-cuts, bridges and at least two rail crossings. There are questions as to whether the Airport Authority will need to fully fund its spur, especially as they also plan major changes to the last mile of road access to the Airport from the Airport Parkway.

Extending Ottawa's LRT has been questioned by Ron Corbett in the *Ottawa Sun* (Sept. 16). He appears to question the need, given that OC Transpo ridership has declined steadily from 103.5 million in 2011 to 97 million in 2014. OC Transpo has not explained the decline and Corbett doesn't offer a reason either. The likely culprits are moves of federal public servant offices to outside the core and declining employment in the federal public service overall. Corbett noted that in the 2010 planning document supporting LRT, Ottawa's population was projected to be 30% higher in 2031, with OC Transpo ridership being 164 million.

CN and VIA Rail

Last year CN removed the stretches of continuous welded rail between Kanata and Pembroke; this fall they removed the remaining bolted rail sections. The City of Ottawa is considering purchasing the right-of-way from Kanata to the Quebec border at Fitzroy Harbor. It could be used as a recreational pathway, or even for commuter rail in the distant future. VIA Rail spent the summer building a new passing siding between Wass and Ellwood to provide another location for meets between Ottawa Station and Fallowfield Station. Trains used the siding in September. September marked the second anniversary of the tragic double-decker bus/VIA rail collision near Fallowfield Station. The Transportation Safety Board has released some preliminary findings; its final report is expected by the end of the year. ■

- Bernie Geiger, Ottawa

TAO Activities/Events

Submission on modernizing intercity bus service

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation is reviewing modernizing rules and regulations for Ontario's intercity bus industry. It is doing so to increase intercity bus ridership and to improve the intercity bus travelling experience. TAO and SWOTA have made a joint submission to the policy review. The withdrawal of bus service in the last decade has left vast swaths of Ontario without public passenger transport. Building on the TAO/SWOTA Network Southwest plan, we recommend an integrated network of rail and bus services coming together at mobility hubs offering connections to local public transit. The proposal may be viewed on the TAO website.

You can have your say about intercity bus travel in Ontario. Public comments may be made until October 23. In your internet browser, enter "intercity bus transportation environmental registry," go to that site; on the right-hand side of the page you will find a box to click labelled "submit comment." You can mail in a comment to Mr. Emre Yura, MTO Environmental Policy Office, 777 Bay Street, Suite 3000, Toronto, ON M7A 2J8. In your submission quote the following registry number: EBR 012-4351.

North Main Line rail passenger action plan

On the occasion of the launch of *The North Main Line Reborn: Action Plan for VIA's North Main Line* by noted transportation consultant Greg Gormick, an all-day rally was held in St. Marys, ON on July 30 by SaveVIA. The crowds were large and enthusiastic; there was good press coverage. The *Action Plan* outlines the steps needed to provide frequent inter-city rail passenger service between Toronto, Guelph, Kitchener, Stratford, St. Marys, and London. It is available on the TAO website.

Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus submission

The Western Ontario Warden's Caucus (WOWC), a not-for-profit organization representing 14 counties and Chatham-Kent in Western Ontario, has led a submission to the Government of Ontario's *Moving Ontario Forward* consultation. This consultation is requesting input on how to allocate funding on critical infrastructure needs and an integrated transportation network across the province. About \$15 billion is available over 10 years for projects outside the GTHA.

The WOWC consulted with member municipalities, the nine single-tier municipalities in the region and various non-government organizations including the Southwestern Ontario Transportation Alliance (SWOTA) and Transport Action Ontario. The submission includes a number of strategic areas, including our \$400 Million (over 5 years) Network Southwest plan. The submission is available on the TAO website.

Support for Ontario's cap-and-trade carbon tax program

In May, the Move the GTHA collaborative, which includes TAO, issued an open letter to Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne regarding Ontario's plan to implement carbon pricing in the province. This program supports Ontario's GHG targets of 15 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80 per

cent below by 2050. The letter recommends using cap-and-trade revenues to help finance low-carbon emitting transportation, specifically projects in the Province's *Big Move* program (through Metrolinx), including some operating costs. Also recommended is a cap on carbon emissions from transportation fuels. The letter can be found on the TAO website.



Breaking News. The proposed expansion of Toronto's Island Airport for jet planes remains highly controversial. The *Toronto Star* (Sept. 15) has reported a new study commissioned by Air Canada raising significant safety concerns and estimating a cost of \$1 billion for the expansion. This newsletter will take up this development in its next issue. ■

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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.

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. Photos of transport at the Grupo Vidanta resort courtesy Rhoda Regenstreif. Thanks to all who helped out with this issue, including Greg Gormick, Howard Levine, Scott St. John, Avrum Regenstreif, and Bernie Geiger. News to September 30, 2015.

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