



Ontario Report

Transport Action Ontario

Oxford County publishes “tool kit” on transportation options for Southwestern Ontario

Several years ago, the County of Oxford embarked on its “Future Oxford” plan to chart a new course on social, economic and environmental policies designed to ensure its long-term competitiveness and prosperity. Being served by two major highways and three railways, the County, primarily ...continued on PAGE 2



Op-ed Analysis

TAO Report: CN Versus VIA Rail

by Greg Gormick

In defending his railway against public criticism and recent articles in the *London Free Press* about its slipshod handling of VIA Rail’s passenger trains, CN president Claude Mongeau has portrayed the company as unworthy of any rebuke. He says any discussion should be confined to facts, not emotion.

In that spirit, I would like to suggest that Mongeau deal with some of the facts I witnessed alongside his company’s Toronto-London main line on Saturday May 19.

My longtime friend and colleague, Transport Action Ontario director Bob Wightman, and I had been working our way east from the weed-grown London station tracks since the late afternoon and we had observed no freight trains between there and Woodstock. This made it difficult to understand why VIA’s eastbound and westbound Toronto-Windsor trains were both running 45 minutes late. ...continued on PAGE 3

FROM THE PRESIDENT

- **PETER MIASEK**



Proposed new land use policies in the Greater Golden Horseshoe are significant

Members will recall that in 2015, the Province initiated a coordinated review of four key land use plans, including the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and the Greenbelt Plan. In December, the Crombie Advisory Panel released its recommendations on how to amend and improve these Plans. See my column in the November/December 2015 issue of

Ontario Report for more details on the Crombie Report.

In early May, the Province released its proposed changes to these four plans. While changes are proposed in many areas, the ones of greatest interest to sustainable transportation advocates are:

- Increasing the intensification target in the Growth Plan to a minimum of 60% of all

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Auditor General’s Special Examination Report on VIA

by Ken Westcar

Going before the judge must be a troubling experience for federal government departments and Crown Corporations. And so it likely was for VIA Rail Canada when the Auditor General (AG) published its Special Examination Report (SER) covering the period November 2013 to September 2015. An understanding of VIA’s troubled

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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new residential development to occur in the existing defined built up area, versus 40% today.

- Increasing designated greenfield area density targets (i.e., new developments outside the built up area) to a minimum of 80 residents + jobs per hectare, versus 50 today.
- Requiring municipalities to plan for density targets of 150 – 200 residents + jobs per hectare around existing and planned major transit stations. This is a new requirement not found in the previous Growth Plan. My read of the definition of subway, LRT, BRT and GO RER stations.
- Requiring identification of transit priority corridors in Official Plans where municipalities would focus transit-related development.
- Supporting the development of community hubs by encouraging public services to be located near strategic growth areas, accessible by active transportation and public transit.
- Improving transit to employment areas.
- Protecting infrastructure corridors for goods movement.
- Requiring mapping of major and potential rapid transit lines and goods movement corridors.

I live in York Region, a rapidly growing edge municipality. York has been working on an update to its Official Plan to 2041. Different Region-wide intensification scenarios have been analyzed by staff planners, and the effect on the newly-constructed housing mix was estimated. Staff is clearly pro-intensification and acknowledge the lower capital and operating costs from higher intensification. However, they have misgivings about intensification targets beyond 50%, as it would force virtually all new home construction to be apartments or condos. They believe a significant fraction of new-home buyers still

want single family detached homes, and hence believe that greater than 50% is unrealistic from a market perspective.

What will be the effect if the province implements these higher intensification targets, the higher designated greenfield targets and the new transit station targets? Will the suburban regions rebel, especially as money from the province to construct rapid transit is inadequate? Will developers step up lobbying and/or appeal to the OMB? Will the prices for detached homes continue to skyrocket? Will the home construction market crater? Will the anticipated growth not materialize?

The combined review also contains various climate change policies, including requiring municipalities to incorporate climate change policies in their Official Plans and to develop greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, reduction strategies and performance measures. The largest contributor to GHG emissions in the province is transportation. Will these policies be enough to slow down the growth in Vehicle Kilometers Travelled? Will the policies be a factor in the upcoming decision whether to restart the Environmental Assessment for the GTA-West expressway (Highway 413)? Should more be done in the outer ring of the GGH by encouraging interurban passenger rail and bus? Should the province become more active in supporting intermodal goods movement?

In conclusion, just as the original 2006 plans changed the face of land use planning in the GGH, the proposed 2016 changes also appear to be very significant, although many questions remain. Public consultation is planned by the Province until September 30, 2016. ■

Oxford County *New Directions* tool-kit

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the City of Woodstock and the Town of Ingersoll, has been very successful in attracting new inward investment to supplement its very large, county-wide agricultural base. Resting on such laurels would be tempting but the County rejected this in favour of a proactive and highly objective look into a carbon constrained future.

Although very strong supporters of previous detailed passenger rail and bus reports from TAO and SWOTA, the County has undertaken to distill these into its own document entitled *New Directions: Advancing Southwestern Ontario's Public Transportation Opportunities*. Oxford County CAO, Peter Crockett, requested a “tool kit” format that can be used by any community for itself to initiate or optimize public transportation services.

The report begins by framing the big picture:

“Mobility is one of the keys to economic, social and environmental prosperity. It affects where people choose to live and work. In turn, this influences where businesses locate. In an increasingly competitive world, highly mobile regions are the ones that succeed in attracting residents, investment and a skilled workforce.

“There is no one-size-fits-all mobility solution. A complete and balanced system that offers maximum convenience and choice requires three types of transportation:

- Active (walking and cycling)
- Private (cars, roads and highways)
- Public (rail, air, inter-community buses, and local transit)

“In Southwestern Ontario today – as in many other North American regions – mobility is neither complete or balanced because the public transportation system has not been developed to its full potential. The result is a lack of alternatives to car travel.

“Designing, building and delivering a complete and integrated public transportation system that can correct this situation is a complex process that is somewhat like assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle. Each piece must be precisely shaped and all must interlock to form a seamless picture.”

New Directions offers a series of interlocking transportation elements with emphasis on integration and incremental improvement combined with the ability to get foundational projects underway quickly. But progress will not happen without public transportation partnerships. Competing modes that do not connect, and/or much needed new services won't happen without governments at all levels, and public and private operators working together. The need for public transportation partnerships to fill in the missing public transportation elements is especially pressing in Southwestern Ontario.

The latest edition of *New Directions* has been sent to many municipal leaders, transportation service providers, chambers of commerce and senior levels of government for consideration. The text, written by Greg Gormick, is informed, logical and succinct and is supported by outstanding graphics prepared by Oxford County staff. It includes discussion of “high performance rail” which has been the travel mode of choice presented in several TAO publications. *New Directions* is available for on-line reference or downloading at the TAO website. Browse: Transport Action Ontario Oxford Tool Kit Final to download as a PDF document. ■

Ken Westcar & Tony Turriffin

CN Versus VIA Rail

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At Paris Junction, all was explained. Instead of holding back the freight trains to let the faster passenger trains smoothly pass each other and get out of the way, CN threw the freights out on the line

ahead of them. This resulted in a series of complicated maneuvers that delayed VIA further, as the four trains were crossed back and forth around each other. The two long passing sidings straddling the double-track main line were of no use because they were full of empty tank cars CN is storing for their owners for a fee now that the crude-by-rail boom has gone bust.

The underlying fact in all of this is that CN didn't give priority to VIA and the passengers were needlessly delayed. As is well known, on-time performance – or lack thereof – plays a large role in influencing passengers to patronize a mode of travel.

Another fact is CN's equally abysmal delivery of service to VIA's U.S. cousin, Amtrak. From April 2015 to March 2016, CN was the least reliable service provider among the six major railways that host Amtrak's trains. By comparison, CP ranked at the top, delivering service three times better than CN, based on the minutes of delay due to sub-standard dispatching and other matters in the hands of the freight railways.

Also missing from Mongeau's discussion is the fact that Amtrak now has a legal case against CN pending with the U.S. government's regulatory agency, the Surface Transportation Board. The complaint is based on Amtrak's assertion that “CN has engaged in a pattern and practice of obstructing and delaying Amtrak passenger trains in violation of its obligation to prioritize Amtrak trains over freight transportation.... CN has also failed to develop, implement, and/or comply with operational protocols that would significantly reduce delays to Amtrak passenger trains.”

In the end, dealing with the facts concerning CN's treatment of VIA is

a job for Minister of Transport Marc Garneau. A good starting point would be for the minister to apply Section 152.1 of the Canada Transportation Act. It gives VIA the right to bring CN before the Canadian Transportation Agency on matters involving the quality and the cost of service.

Curiously, VIA's president – a lawyer, a Mulroney era political staffer and a Conservative appointee, but not a railroader – rejects the use of this legislation in dealing with CN. This is especially puzzling given that VIA has previously used it successfully in matters involving CP and two short line railways.

If Garneau, too, is unwilling to use this legal measure to benefit rail passengers, then perhaps he might quietly bring some facts to the attention of CN. The principal one should be that his government holds the right to invoke specific legislation that can compel the freight railways to treat VIA's passengers better. He might demonstrate this to the CN execs by reminding them that the previous government enacted the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act in 2014 to protect the interests of Canada's agri-business sector. The same could easily be done for passengers.

Indeed, facts are to be favoured over emotion when it comes to all questions about the future of Canada's bedraggled rail passenger service. Here's hoping Garneau will raise some of those outlined here if and when he takes action against CN on behalf of the citizens who own, fund and use VIA. Over to you, Transport Minister Garneau. ■

Greg Gormick is the policy adviser for the Save VIA citizens' committee in St. Marys.

Auditor General's report on VIA Rail

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legislative and political history is needed to put the SER in full perspective. Successive federal governments who have repeatedly knelt before the personal automobile, the short-haul flight and have persistently ignored the very negative and social and economic impacts of a fragmented public transportation system and sub-par tourist industry are really a watermark on each page of this document.

But VIA management, it points out, also have culpability and both VIA users and their advocates are well aware of their corporate missteps and spin machine that continue to both annoy and insult. Although on-board services are quite acceptable by international standards and train staff are generally accommodating, one gets the feeling of a growing creakiness in the organization and the SER shines a light on the many reasons why.

The full Auditor General's report can be read on-line on the website of the Office of the Auditor General. Some of the key points are as follows:

- Corporate governance.** It's quite clear that the political nature of the VIA board precludes the necessary talent to plan, manage and operate a customer-focused passenger rail network. Since 2008 VIA has been unable to obtain federal approval of its five-year corporate plan and has resorted to short-term measures to mitigate operational crises. Whether this is a direct result of VIA management capability or stone-walling by entrenched federal government ideology is not clear from the report. Either way, there is no future for VIA without a fully-funded, long-term corporate plan and a forward-thinking federal mandate.

- Frequency and track access.** The report discusses how this inhibits VIA operations and, superficially, one might be inclined to sympathize with VIA. Both CN and CP are primarily focused on shareholder value, but CN recently rejected VIA's accusations that it consistently gives priority to its freight over passenger traffic. So where is the truth? Why is Transport Canada not working with CN and CP on a better plan of mutual accommodation based the on facts? Meanwhile VIA continues to display conflicting behaviour by announcing a dedicated Montreal – Toronto track plan, separate from the CN-owned infrastructure, while, at the same time telling Kingston passengers that their station will be modernized and trains “repurposed.” In fact, VIA

spent close to \$500 million to add passing track on the current route through Kingston to reduce conflict with freights which should mean that a passenger-only dedicated tract Toronto-Peterborough-Smith Falls is not required.

- Contract management.** The SER highlights the fact that many VIA capital projects have gone wildly over-budget (Exhibit 5 below). It shows eye-watering variances that would result in a major management cull in a private company. But an audit on infrastructure improvement, performed by KPMG, has deflected several access to information requests by concerned citizens. The conclusion one must draw from this secrecy is that it comprises a litany of very poor planning and ineffective

VIA RAIL CANADA	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Key financial indicators (in millions of dollars)					
Revenues	280	270	277	283	275
Total operating costs	597	578	556	544	536
Government funding - operations	317	308	279	261	261
Government funding - capital	82	96	170	237	269
Key operating statistics					
Passengers (in thousands)	3,800	3,891	3,923	4,130	4,153
Average passenger load factor (%)	60	56	54	55	57
Overall on-time performance (%)	76	82	83	84	82
Number of employees	2,608	2,662	2,800	2,899	2,937
OAG Special Examination - VIA Rail Canada - Exhibit 1: Summary of VIA's performance over the past five fiscal years. Source: adapted from 2014 Annual Report, VIA Rail Canada.					

project management by VIA and other contractual players.

You are encouraged to read the entire Special Examination Report as it tells an interesting, if troubling story. But the bottom line is that the fundamental problems rest squarely on the shoulders of Marc Garneau, Federal Minister of Transport, to sort the mess out. Instead, he has chosen to kick the can down the road for another three years of study while funding VIA to “imagineer” its future rolling stock requirements. Both actions are unacceptable.

“Rise, ye, from the alter of the personal automobile, the short-haul flight, the rolling railway museum and misguided political dogma and soon give Canada a passenger railway that works – please.” ■

- Ken Westcar, Woodstock

The Auditor General's report on VIA may be found on-line by searching for "VIA Rail Canada Inc.—Special Examination Report—2016."

Bombardier further delays Toronto streetcar deliveries

On April 25, Bombardier Transportation announced that it will not meet the new streetcar deliveries it promised for 2016. Bombardier had previously said it would build four cars a month starting in April or 32 cars to the end of December. It now says that it will only build 13 more cars in 2016. Bombardier Transportation also announced it would reorganize its manufacturing to insure it will meet the contract requirement of 204 streetcars by the end of 2019. It will move streetcar production from Thunder Bay to its Kingston factory supplemented by its La Pocatière, Quebec plant. A new president has been appointed for its operations in the Americas. No new timetable of streetcar deliveries has been announced for 2017 and beyond.

Mayor John Tory is dismayed by this turn of events as are other

Exhibit 5: Improvements to CN Kingston Subdivision rail structure		
Initial project 2007	Revised project in light of 2009 Canada Economic Action Plan	Project completion and results as of 31 Dec. 2014
\$21 million	\$251 million	\$318.5 million
Improve track and some stations	160km of triple track at \$1.6M/km	70km triple track at \$4.5M/km
Expected benefits	Revised expected benefits	Actual results obtained
12 additional trains	14 additional trains	8 additional trains
Reduced travel times	Reduced travel times	Increased travel times
Improved on-time performance (stood at 82%)	Improved on-time performance	Worse on-time performance (average 65%)
\$32 million in additional revenue	\$32 million in additional revenue	No additional revenue
23% increase in ridership	23% increase in ridership	17% decrease in ridership since 2009
OAG Special Examination - VIA Rail Canada - Exhibit 5 (not all information included here)		

officials. Observers are wondering whether the announcement of additional assembly lines is linked to Bombardier's aerospace division efforts seeking a \$1 billion bailout from the federal government for its C-Series commercial aircraft building program which has just received an order for these planes from Delta Airlines. As reported in the *Toronto Star* April 26, both Josh Colle, Chair of Toronto's transit commission, and Andy Byford, CEO of the TTC are openly doubtful Bombardier will fulfill its promises. The penalty for late delivery is limited to \$51 million by the contract with Bombardier. The TTC is considering a lawsuit for further damages as a result of delivery delays such as the cost to keep refurbishing its current aged streetcar fleet in order to have enough cars regularly available for its streetcar routes.

Metrolinx is also affected by Bombardier's glacial pace of streetcar construction. It has an order for 182 LRVs (with an option for an additional 118) for its Eglinton-Crosstown line in Toronto and for the Kitchener-Waterloo LRT, both under construction. The Finch Avenue West and Sheppard Avenue East LRT lines in Toronto, still in the future, will also use Bombardier LRVs from this Metrolinx order. Metrolinx should have received a pilot LRV this spring; the Eglinton and Finch LRT lines are to open in 2021.

It is reported that Waterloo Region is already contemplating a situation where the GrandLinq consortium is ready to open the Kitchener-Waterloo LRT in July of 2017 and receive payments for operations and maintenance from the Region but may not have sufficient LRVs to open the line for revenue service. Its first LRV was due this August, now promised for December, the last of its 14 cars now due in October 2017. ■

Transport Action Ontario board elected at April 16 AGM

President: Peter Miasek< Markham
 Vice-President: Tony Turriffin, Toronto
 Secretary: Howard Levine, Toronto
 Treasurer: Tony Rubin, Toronto
 Past President: Natalie Litwin, Toronto
 Members-at-large:
 James Armstrong, Windsor
 Eric Boutilier, North Bay
 Roger Brook, Toronto
 Richard Crawford, Lakefield
 Avrum Regenstreif, Toronto
 Scott St.John, London
 Ken Westcar, Woodstock
 Robert Wightman, Brampton

Thanks for their dedicated service to two Board members who have stepped down, Linda Savory-Gordon, Sault Ste.Marie, and Dan Hammon, Oshawa.

Welcome to new board members

Éric Boutilier - The TAO Annual Meeting in April elected three new board members. We welcome Éric Boutilier who divides his time between Sudbury and North Bay working as a writer and in radio. He grew up in North Bay, is bi-lingual, graduated from Canadore College in media studies, and has also taken courses at Collège Boréal.

Éric recently became active in North Bay-based NEORN, the North Eastern Ontario Rail Network, a group which includes TAO and Sault-based Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains. NEORN is particularly focussed on gaining government support to bring back the *Northlander*, the Toronto-Cochran passenger train operated by the Ontario Northland Railway that was terminated by the Liberal government in September of 2012. Éric is working to bring together

local residents, businesses, organizations, elected officials, local governments, and others to build the case for renewed daily passenger train service on the *Northlander* route.

Much is at stake. Since 2012 there has been a precipitous decline in bus as well as rail passenger transportation throughout northern and northeastern Ontario. Economic decline is following increasing isolation. The young and seniors in particular are leaving the region, even leaving cities such as North Bay that no longer have affordable and reliable alternatives to driving on uncertain highways (often closed by events such as washouts). Éric is working to document the region's transportation deficit and to propose public transportation alternatives that will help the region get back to being a viable place to live with a revitalized economy. ■

Robert Wightman - New to the TAO board, we welcome Robert Wightman. Robert was raised in Toronto, obtained an electrical engineering degree from the University of Toronto, followed by an education degree with specialties in physics, math, and computers. While at the University of Toronto, Robert became a founding member of Streetcars for Toronto that successfully fought for the retention of streetcars by the TTC. From 1997 until retirement in 2002, Robert headed the Science Department of the Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School in Malton, in the Peel District School Board. He has lived in Brampton for many years. Robert has been active in the community with his church and with the learning disabilities association in Peel.

Robert has studied urban planning, transportation geography, highway engineering, and physical geography. Throughout his teaching career he has given many professional presentations. His presentation to

the Scarborough City Council in favour of LRT helped Scarborough choose streetcars on dedicated right-of-way, later reversed by the Province which imposed Skytrain technology that became the Scarborough RT. TAO can very much benefit from Robert's technical and policy knowledge as we advocate for sensible rail and transit that is not gold-plated but which is efficient, effective and affordable. ■

James Armstrong - We welcome James Armstrong back to the TAO board as its Windsor area representative. James has been a supporter of public transit and VIA Rail for many years. He is a frequent contributor of letters to the editor in the *Windsor Star* on these two subjects. Born in Gt.Britain, his family emigrated to Canada in 1957, arriving in Montreal on one of CP's Empress ships then proceeding on to Windsor. James retired from Canada Post recently. He previously served on the board of Transport 2000 Ontario.

A frequent user of VIA Rail, James has been across the country on its trains and, in 2013, took VIA's train to Churchill, Manitoba. Having observed the decline of VIA first-hand, he believes strongly that the system ought to be substantially improved, especially in southwestern Ontario. Besides speaking out in the press, he can be found at all-candidates meetings during elections and attending other public meetings where he raises the public transit and VIA issues. He has supported an Essex County-wide bus system, talked about for years by local governments but never funded as too costly. He strongly supports TAO's Network Southwest initiative. ■

Public transportation service reductions in Northeastern Ontario

NEORN, the Northern and Eastern Ontario Rail Network, is a network composed of rail advocacy groups and stakeholders from across Northern and Eastern Ontario dedicated to the promotion of passenger and freight rail service throughout the region consistent with The Growth Plan for Northern Ontario, with rail services linked to connecting intercity buses and local transit.

Created in 2013, NEORN is a unique partnership of stakeholders and potential supporters including, but not limited to: First Nations, municipalities, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, local railways, businesses, industries, industry associations, unions, local coalitions or action groups, environmental groups, and student groups.

On its website www.neorn.ca, NEORN has documented the deterioration of the region's public transportation leading to isolation and social and economic decline. It is working hard to reverse these trends which have hit other parts of Ontario as well. Revitalizing local and regional economies with growing communities and services that assure quality of life depend on more than good roads; good regional public transportation is a necessary ingredient as well.

Here is part of the timeline of service reductions that NEORN has chronicled:

June 2012 VIA Rail Canada (*Canadian*)
- Toronto to Vancouver (via Sudbury & Hornepayne) 3X weekly winter train service reduced to 2X weekly

September 2012 Ontario Northland (*Northlander*) - Toronto to Cochrane 6X weekly train service cancelled

April 2014 Bearskin Airlines
- Ottawa to North Bay weekly flight service cancelled

March 2015 Caribou Coach
- Hearst to Longlac 3X weekly motor coach service suspended indefinitely

July 2015 Algoma Central Railway (ACR)
- Sault-Ste-Marie to Hearst 3X weekly train service suspended temporarily (and still suspended pending federal government support for the new First Nation's operator ready and willing to begin service).

September 2015 Greyhound Canada
- Ottawa to Sudbury 3X daily motor coach service reduced to 1X daily
- Sudbury to Winnipeg 2X daily motor coach service reduced to 1X daily
- Toronto to Sudbury 3X daily motor coach service reduced to 1X daily

November 2015 Ontario Northland bus service
- Kapuskasing to Hearst 1X daily motor coach service reduced to 3X weekly
- Matheson to Cochrane 2X daily motor coach service reduced to 1X daily
- Timmins to Cochrane 3X daily motor coach service reduced to 2X daily

January 2015 Ontario Northland bus service
- Introduction of a 3X weekly Ottawa to Sudbury motor coach service

Editor's editorial

Transport Action and the *Ontario Report* newsletter

Meeting in Toronto on May 14, the Transport Action Canada (TAC) annual meeting elected Bruce Budd as a Director, followed by the Board of TAC electing Bruce as its new President, marking the retirement of Harry Gow from that role. Readers will know Bruce as formerly the TAO Secretary. He faces the difficult task of revitalizing Transport Action. Fortunately, TAO and TAC have pooled their financial resources to hire a part-time staff person to especially undertake the administrative side of reorganization. Justin Prest has more than met our expectations and has been working hard on new administrative systems and on a new website. We will be fundraising soon to keep this office manager position permanent.

One likely change will be the way Transport Action will connect with members and the general public. Newsletters will be replaced by using our website to provide important transportation-related news, and in particular advocacy-related news as we move forward with campaigns and education. In effect, this will move what we have done with the *Ontario Report* newsletter to continuous news on the Transport Action website. Exactly how this will work remains to be seen. We are still a largely volunteer-based group meaning that our membership will have an even stronger role to play with respect to our website content. Please stay tuned.

This present *Ontario Report* newsletter is more than a month late, for which I take full responsibility. Illness, now overcome, was responsible for this delay. I'm proud of the many Ontario newsletters that I have produced over the years, and thank all those who helped make it happen, especially the contributors whom I have called upon, some on a regular basis, who have responded with excellent pieces.

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Editor's editorial:

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VIA Rail is dying

VIA Rail Canada's decline has been constant since it was founded in 1977, hacked away and shrunk by successive Liberal and Conservative governments. TAC has been ineffective in countering this decline. The unraveling of VIA accelerated with the VIA presidency of Marc Laliberté and has continued with its current president Yves Desjardins-Siciliano. It required the outside efforts of journalist/consultant Greg Gormick to initiate TAC's National Dream Renewed (NDR) campaign against the system-wide VIA cuts of 2012. The NDR campaign in New Brunswick and SW Ontario were especially successful. Contacts with mayors, town hall meetings, press releases, press interviews and coverage, meetings with MPs were a model of advocacy. Gormick was asked to research and write about how VIA could be transformed into a successful modern passenger rail system, drawing heavily on U.S. examples, Amtrak in particular. From this came a study of the rail industry options for New Brunswick, the Network Southwest train and bus proposal for SW Ontario, and a major plan for the modernization of VIA Rail, The VIA 1-4-10 Plan. The latter two reports highlighted the concept of High Performance Rail for the Windsor-Quebec City corridor featuring fast, frequent, and reliable trains of bi-level passenger cars and how that could transform the public transportation landscape of Central Canada.

Since the Liberals assumed office federally in October, there has been no indication that they care about reversing the downward spiral of VIA. VIA's current president has

essentially continued the same long-term plan evident with Laliberté: end VIA as a provider of public transportation except in the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal triangle where it will be taken over by a private operator because it will be profitable. Desjardins-Siciliano has his version of this: the \$4 billion High Frequency Rail on new dedicated track Toronto-Smith Falls-Ottawa-Montreal (and what do Oshawa, Belleville, Kingston, Brockville, and Cornwall get?). He has no plan for SW Ontario. He has announced the end of the *Canadian* which will shortly become an occasional tourist train. The *Ocean* has been put on the same path to demise as was the *Canadian* with only two-days a week service to Halifax planned for the off-peak. None of the new trains announced years ago for SW Ontario (after the great cuts) have materialized. Desjardins-Siciliano has recognized the terrible state of the coach fleet, and wants funds for new trains, but Heaven help us that he would get to select the equipment.

Obviously the situation is desperate. All the meetings that TAC and other groups have had with VIA staff have come to a zero. They

have proven diversionary with no outcomes that bare any resemblance to what Transport Action has called for in our outstanding studies. So, this throws a large ball into Bruce Budd's court as the new TAC president. He has already started to work modernizing our office and web presence. There will be a new relationship between TAC and "members," people who want to support a "meat-and-potatoes" passenger rail system for Canada, trains that make easy travel possible between all city-pairs, not just a handful of big cities. I firmly believe that our advocacy will have to take the direction it had not so long ago in 2012 if the passenger train is to remain part of Canada's future.

— Tony Turriffin

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Website: [//transport-action-ontario.com](http://transport-action-ontario.com)

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Board meetings: Regularly scheduled meetings are the first Thursday of the month 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; we meet less regularly during the summer month.

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