



The Honourable John Yakabuski
Minister of Transportation
77 Wellesley Street West
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Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

20 August 2018

Dear Minister Yakabuski,

The Southwestern Ontario Transportation Alliance would like to congratulate you on your recent election victory. We welcome your commitments to delivering improved public transportation for all regions of Ontario.

Your government has an opportunity to significantly improve passenger rail service for communities across Southwestern Ontario within your first term of office. We are pleased to see that you are continuing the Environmental Assessment process for High Speed Rail, but we ask that you remove the restrictions placed upon it by the previous government.

We encourage you to give equal consideration to the option of investments to enhance services over the existing rail corridors through Stratford and Woodstock, leveraging the federal government's procurement of high performance 200 km/h trains for VIA Rail's intercity services.

The London-Toronto and Kitchener-Toronto travel times achievable by upgrading the existing corridors would be comparable with the proposal developed for the previous government, and a reasonable speed and frequency of service between London and Kitchener could also be delivered sooner than by building a greenfield alignment cutting across the farmland and rural infrastructure of Oxford County. This would also ensure continued service to communities that would be bypassed by High Speed Rail, and direct services to Chatham, Sarnia, and Windsor.

Therefore, we urge you to expand the restricted Environment Assessment initiated by the previous government for its preferred new rail alignment to include a full comparison with the option of upgrading the existing rail corridors for high performance passenger service.

Should the expanded Environmental Assessment determine that High Performance Rail would deliver the results needed to grow our economy, take the pressure off our highways, and bring our communities closer together, the cost savings would be considerable. Those funds could then support your promised restoration of the Northlander train service, and support the restoration of intercommunity bus services that many smaller communities across Ontario need in order to fully participate in our province's future economic prosperity and social vibrancy.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and your team to discuss the transportation challenges facing communities in our region.

Sincerely,

Terence Johnson,
President, SWOTA

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