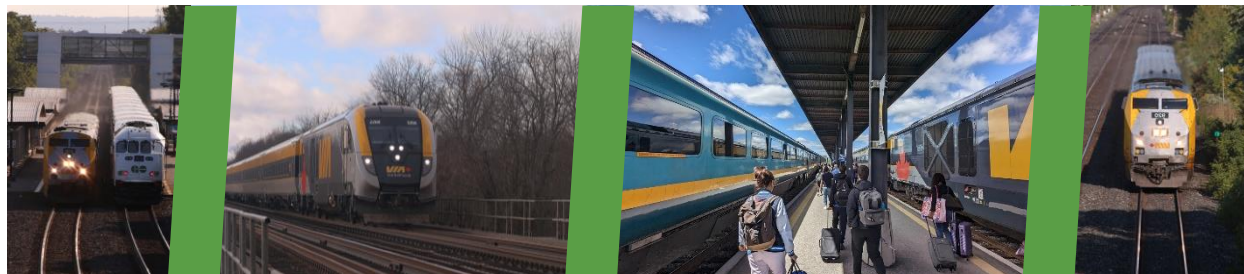




Ideas in Motion, 2025

Southern Ontario Intercity Passenger Rail Investments

The proposals in this policy brief are extracted from our 2024 [Beyond HFR](#) report which came at the request of the federal Parliamentary All-Party Rail Caucus and was generously partially funded by UNIFOR. Detailed information including costing data can be found in the appropriate sections of the report.



With rapid population and economic growth, increasing traffic congestion, aging population and growing environmental concerns, the time to improve intercity passenger rail service is now. Currently, VIA Rail Canada provides such service in southern Ontario, operating largely on rail lines owned by CN. Due to heavy congestion from freight rail, VIA’s service suffers from low frequencies, low speeds and poor on-time performance.

The federal government is advancing its \$12B+ High Frequency Rail (HFR) project between Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City. In Ontario, this involves constructing a new/upgraded corridor through Peterborough and Smiths Falls to separate freight and passenger rail. In addition to dramatically improving service to these large cities, HFR opens up optimization opportunities for service along the Lakeshore line through Cobourg, Belleville, Kingston, Brockville etc. as summarized below.

Service improvements are also needed in southwestern Ontario, which is not covered by HFR.

The *Beyond HFR* report identifies various low-cost, low-risk, easily-manageable “bottleneck relief” projects that will significantly improve passenger service across southern Ontario while also benefitting the efficient movement of freight. This public investment in host railway infrastructure needs to be accompanied by a regulatory or contract framework that ensures better dispatching of passenger trains. The projects are summarized going east to west in the table below. Many can be completed within two or five years.

Project	Capital Cost (2024\$)
Brockville Station improvements to enable more J trains, boosting service	6
Kingston Station improvements to allow overnight stabling and hub operation	11
Upgrade Kitchener-London line to handle 60 mph speed from current 30 mph	25
London Station – new third track	15
Reinstall second track Sarnia to Komoka	55
Strathroy, Watford, Wyoming and Sarnia Station improvements	17
Windsor-Detroit temporary connection thru Walkerville (AMTRAK/VIA proposal)	37

The federal and provincial governments should work together to select projects from this report for prompt funding and rapid implementation, based on their economic and social benefits.