



The Bulletin

TRANSPORT ACTION ATLANTIC

SPRING – SUMMER 2017

Confederation Bridge is 20 years old



PHOTO BY TIM HAYMAN

After two decades of successful operation, the general consensus is that the “fixed link” was a big plus for Prince Edward Island. Perhaps the biggest benefit was controlling the cost of crossing the strait. Compared with Newfoundland, PEI got an excellent deal – but some advocates say it could be even better.

See story beginning on page 3



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Once the flagship of Marine Atlantic's PEI fleet, MV *Abegweit* was rendered obsolete on completion of the Confederation Bridge. She ended her days on the beach at a scrapyard in Alang, India, in May 2004.

Confederation Bridge celebrates 20 years

A good deal for PEI

May 31, 1997, was a landmark day in the history of Canada's smallest province. The 12.7-kilometre Confederation Bridge – the world's longest “fixed link” over ice-covered waters – opened to traffic on that date. On the previous evening, the ferries that had for eight decades connected Borden, Prince Edward Island, with the mainland at Cape Tormentine, New Brunswick made their final runs.

Construction of the bridge was the subject of often-heated debate in the 1980s and early 1990s, with proponents viewing the project as a huge economic boon to the Island, while those opposed insisted it would destroy the traditional way of life on PEI. The issue was ultimately decided by a plebiscite, orchestrated by then-premier Joe Ghiz, in which just under 60% of residents voted in favour of the fixed link.

The Government of Canada – responsible for providing “continuous communication” between PEI and the mainland under the terms whereby the province joined Confederation in 1873 – selected the design and the consortium that would build the bridge. The decision also involved a federal-provincial agreement that the proposed structure would on completion replace the constitutional ferry link. However, the deal also involved guarantees regarding the setting of tolls, and assurances that the federally-supported seasonal ferry service between Wood Islands and Caribou NS would continue to operate.

It took four years and over a billion dollars to build the Confederation Bridge. Twenty years later, it still has some detractors, but the vast majority of islanders and visitors alike agree the massive change it undeniably brought had far more positive than negative consequences. It's certainly been all good news for interprovincial trucking, with substantial productivity gains from time saved over both travelling on and waiting for ferries. While it might be argued that the bridge is occasionally closed to high-sided vehicles under wind conditions that might have still permitted ferries to operate, the actual reliability factor has been very high. And the province's vital tourist industry has adapted well to the change, even though the bridge allows visitors to make an easy escape if the weather turns nasty.

But the biggest plus has been controlling the cost to users. The agreement that tied bridge tolls to the consumer price index has proved to be extremely beneficial. The original toll in 1997 for a passenger vehicle or light truck was set at \$35.00. Annual adjustments mean that the round trip for any two-axle vehicle (which also includes most motor homes) this year costs \$46.50 – an increase of less than 33% over 20 years.

Contrast that with the rates on the Marine Atlantic ferry service between North Sydney NS and Port aux Basques NL – also a constitutional obligation of the

federal government. Over the same 20-year period, the cost of crossing that stretch of water has more than doubled. Some of the increase has been in fuel surcharges; another factor is higher cost-recovery demands placed on Marine Atlantic by Transport Canada. During the 2015 election campaign the Trudeau Liberals pledged to address that issue, but once in office their promise was conveniently forgotten.

Back to PEI, the seasonal ferry at Wood Islands continues to enjoy federal funding, and users get an extra benefit from the bridge deal hammered out in the 1990s. While it costs a bit more than driving across the bridge, the Northumberland Ferries tariff is unique. The charge for an automobile or light truck is a flat rate – just like the bridge toll – with no extra fare for the driver or any other occupants of the vehicle. Other federally supported ferries – including the Newfoundland routes, the run from PEI to the Magdalen Islands, and the Saint John-Digby crossing – all charge extra for the driver and each passenger.



The MV *Holiday Island* sits tied up at the Wood Islands dock in late May 2017, viewed from on board the MV *Confederation*. (PHOTO – Tim Hayman)

Undeniably, Prince Edward Islanders, visitors and business interests have done well because of the bridge, and the tariff conditions agreed to at the outset. But that's not enough for some advocates, who want to see tolls reduced or eliminated entirely.

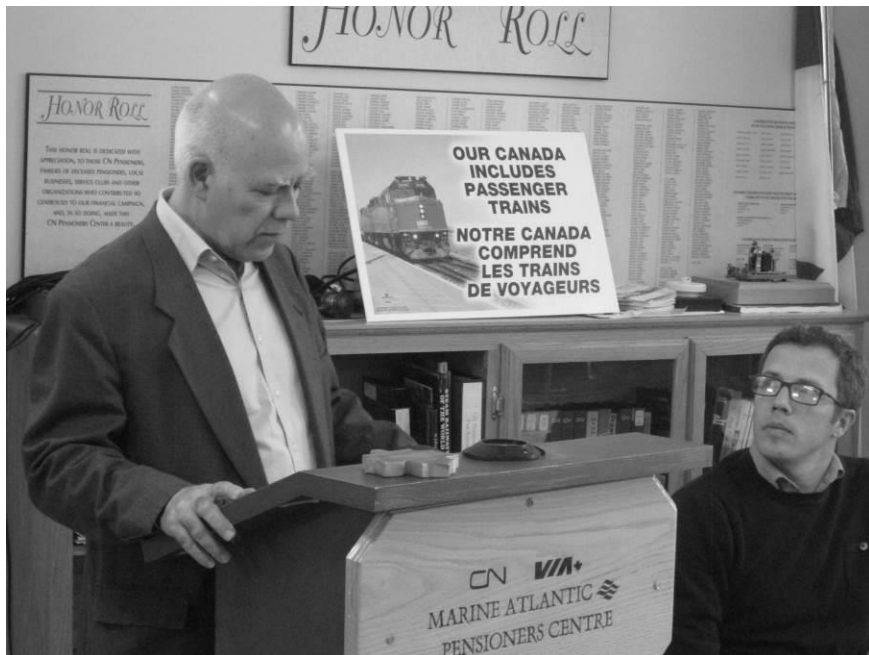
Liberal-appointed Senator Percy Downe is leading the charge. He points out that the federally-funded Champlain Bridge replacement being built in Montreal – at a cost four times that of Confederation Bridge – will be toll-free. Why, he asks, are taxpayers footing the full bill for construction and maintenance of the new

crossing in Quebec, while the crossing to PEI remains user-pay? Confronted with that question during a pre-Canada Day visit to Charlottetown, the Prime Minister was non-committal.

- Ted Bartlett

Advocacy

Provincial leadership needed on public transportation



New Brunswick Green Party Leader David Coon was keynote speaker at TAA's annual general meeting on May 13th. At his left is Vice-president Ashley Morton, who moderated the panel discussion.

The leader of New Brunswick's Green Party says the provincial government needs a vision for public transportation – and a designated cabinet minister should have a clearly-mandated responsibility for this vital social obligation. Following his keynote address at Transport Action Atlantic's annual general meeting in Moncton, David Coon called on Premier Brian Gallant to take action.

“Public transportation is an essential service to ensure New Brunswickers can access healthcare and employment, and travel for work and family obligations within our metropolitan areas and between our regions,” said the Fredericton South MLA. “The percentage of people who do not drive or drive rarely is rapidly

increasing as our population ages, at the same time as public services are being centralized in our urban centres, requiring more travel to access them, yet no cabinet minister has yet been given the mandate to ensure New Brunswickers can travel without depending on private vehicle ownership.”

Premier Gallant needs to lay out his vision for public transportation in New Brunswick,” said Mr. Coon. “The timing is perfect as he has just received recommendations from the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation’s task force on public transportation this month. New revenue from federal government for public transportation and from carbon pricing will provide funds to pay for improving access to public transportation in our cities, within our regions, and between them.”



Transportation Journalist Erica Butler of the Halifax *Examiner* makes a point during the lively panel discussion at TAA’s annual general meeting.

The Transport Action Atlantic AGM featured a panel discussion with the Green Party leader joining Halifax transportation journalist Erica Butler, Moncton Councillor Greg Turner, TAA board member Michael Perry, and transportation planner Adrian Hetherington. The lively session moderated by TAA vice-president Ashley Morton focused on the general reluctance of provincial governments to take ownership of public transportation issues – a phenomenon which is certainly not unique to New Brunswick.

For his part, David Coon says a public transportation system for New Brunswick should include provincial support for: rural transit authorities, such as the Rural Lynx proposed for southwestern New Brunswick, to link towns and rural areas

with public services and employment in urban centres; expanding municipal transit services; connecting urban centres through partnership with VIA Rail.

“Most importantly”, he concluded, “the Premier must give a member of his cabinet the mandate to establish an accessible and affordable public transportation system for New Brunswick. To this point, no one in government has held that mandate, leaving us with inadequate, incomplete, and inconvenient public transportation infrastructure.”

What others are saying:

Commentators support call for better transport policy

David Coon’s call to action drew substantial support from commentators in the New Brunswick media.

Norbert Cunningham, daily columnist in the *Moncton Times & Transcript*, offered support to Mr. Coon’s objectives, while suggesting that he hadn’t gone quite far enough:

“What we need is seamlessly integrated road, rail, air and possibly other transportation options that serve as much more than just a way to get people from place A to place B efficiently, economically and conveniently, in all kinds of weather.

“Transportation is one key to future prosperity and success in our province, so desperate to find its economic feet. It needs to tie into our strengths and help us build on them. It needs to connect and unify, not keep our prime cities, businesses and research centres apart in parochial silos. It needs to afford access to all areas of the province from all other areas. It must be quick and efficient.

“We have a rail link from Campbellton to Moncton, some days, and in the time it takes a train (5.5 hours) to travel the 323 km one way, you can almost drive there and back without speeding. And that’s after millions spent to ‘improve’ the rail bed and track. It hasn’t improved travel times.”

Rod Allen, assistant managing editor of the *Times & Transcript*, also weighed in with his City Views column:

“I think Mr. Coon is absolutely right about the timing; there are a lot of rural New Brunswickers my age who need to get to the cities, which are the only thing growing in this province and might one day house most of the region’s health care and other services particularly essential to older people.

“However, I will also note that young New Brunswickers, many of whom can’t afford a car as easily as my generation, could use a decent, reasonably priced way to move from city to city. Believe it or not, I know a few. Ask any of them about the bus or the current state of rail. Sure, the people running what’s left of either do their best, but I expect even they would acknowledge a little financial help would make their services better. I wish Mr. Coon – and the premier if he follows this good advice – the best of luck in lobbying corporate critters like VIA, which has already heard many an appeal from New Brunswick voices passionate about the return of ‘real rail’ out here in the boonies.”

Blogger and commentator Bill Belliveau offered some US research to support his contention that investments in public transportation can bring a huge payback:

“New Brunswick is a tiny, shrinking province of 750,000 people spread over 72,908 square kilometres. Public transportation leads to the agglomeration of people in a central place. The more people who collect in an urban centre, the more jobs cluster there, boosting wages and economic productivity. The key to agglomeration in a low-density region like New Brunswick is affordable, convenient, speedy public transit that encourages densification near transit stops and helps to revitalize small rural communities. The hidden economic value of intra-provincial public transit could be worth millions, if not billions of dollars to the New Brunswick economy.

“As I understand it, rail transit produces the highest cost-benefit ratio for public transit investments, particularly where there are rail lines already in place...global economics of high speed public transit are generally measured in population density and ROI calculations measured in passenger volumes and hefty tolls. What if public transit investments were measured in job creation, increased productivity and growth in GDP? Would that justify public investment? Public transportation connects people to jobs, supports business development, reduces carbon emissions and generates employment with every dollar invested.

“A study by the American Transportation Association indicates that every time a metro area added 4 rail seats per 1,000 residents, the central city added 320 employees per square mile. Adding 85 rail miles delivered a 7 percent increase in employment. A 10 percent expansion in transit service (rail or bus seats) produced a wage increase between \$53 and \$194 per worker per year in the city center and increased gross GDP between 1 and 2 percent.

“The study shows that two out of three jobs created by public transit investments replace jobs hardest hit by economic downturn. A \$1 billion investment in public transportation yields an estimated 30,000 jobs. The study reveals that two out of three (67 percent) of the jobs created by capital investment in the public transit industry replaced lost blue-collar jobs with

“green jobs” in the public transit sector, in manufacturing, service, repair work, drivers, transit crews and construction. One in three (33 percent) of the new jobs were created in the white-collar skilled (32 percent) or semi-skilled (1 percent) category – clerical, managerial and technical engineers.

“Public transportation services provide improved mobility, generate jobs, enable economic growth and support public policies regarding energy use, air quality and carbon emission reductions.

“Productivity impacts quantified in the report include travel cost savings, worker reliability improvements, access to broader labour markets with more diverse skills, shifts in consumer spending and regional growth spurred by local transit investment. Public transit linking all regions of New Brunswick by rail and local transit services would appear to be a far better investment than twinning highways to the north shore.

“Transportation costs and commute times are important factors in income inequality as many people cannot afford to live or move close to job centers. Low-income families typically pay a higher percentage of their incomes to commute than their higher-paid counterparts. Some people are forced to draw unemployment insurance because they can’t afford to commute to jobs forty or fifty kilometres away. If New Brunswick hopes to step into the future, we have to figure out how to bring our people together in a more productive economy. In my view, that will only happen with more education and the availability of affordable, convenient, speedy public transportation.”

TAA Members Events

On Saturday, March 18th, TAA hosted the first of what we hope will be many events for our members. This event was targeted primarily towards our members in Nova Scotia, as we set out on an excursion from Halifax to Truro and back. At noon, seventeen TAA members (including our Vice President and several members of the board) gathered at the VIA Rail/Maritime Bus station in downtown Halifax and boarded Maritime Bus Route 103 to head to Truro. Despite running slightly behind schedule the bus trip was smooth and uneventful, with only two short stops in Dartmouth and at the airport. The chatter on board throughout the trip was full of discussion about public transportation locally and farther afield!

Upon arrival in Truro we made our way to the Engineroom Pub, where we enjoyed lunch before migrating over to the adjacent VIA Rail station. Our wait in the station gave us a chance to talk a bit more about what TAA was up to, and provide an opportunity for members to provide feedback on what they thought we were doing well (or not so well), and what they’d like to see us do in the future. There were some excellent ideas floated during this chat.

Soon *the Ocean* arrived, running only slightly behind schedule, and we made our way on board. The Service Manager had set aside a full coach for those boarding

in Truro – between our group and the others boarding there (including several families with children), we pretty well filled the whole car!



Attendees of TAA's Nova Scotia Members Rendez-vous excursion wait on the platform in Truro as VIA #14 arrives. (Photo – Tim Hayman)

The train ride back seemed to be enjoyed by all, and the sun even came out in full force to highlight the lovely scenery on the run into Halifax. Some chose to sit back and enjoy the ride, while others continued to talk about the many challenges and opportunities facing public transportation in the Maritimes. The train made up a few more minutes of time on the way, and arrived in Halifax just shy of 15 minutes late.

In the evening, we hosted a talk and panel event featuring Susan Williams (Eastern General Manager, VIA Rail), Wayne Groszko (Ecology Action Centre) and Mahmudur Rahman Fatmi (Dalhousie University). Susan led the session with a presentation on VIA's current and future plans in the Maritimes, and then all three panelists engaged in a discussion about regional public transportation, driven by questions from the audience.

If you weren't able to attend the evening discussion, you can see a video of it on our Facebook page.

This event was a great success, and we were really encouraged by the turnout and the engagement of everyone who joined us. We've now begun to think about possibilities for our next event, which we hope to hold this fall. If Bridgewater's new public transit system gets off the ground by September as is currently hoped (see the story on Page 23), we're considering arranging a trip to Bridgewater to

check out the new system and show our support for their foray into the public transit world. Plans for this event will be sent out by email and likely by mail as we approach the fall and finalize those plans, so be sure to keep an eye out for that. We hope you'll be able to join us! For our members elsewhere in the Maritimes, have no fear – we're also exploring options to hold events elsewhere so even more of our members can take part.

- Tim Hayman

Rail News

VIA Annual Report update

Earlier this year VIA Rail released its annual report for 2016. In fashion typical of VIA's recent releases, the presentation was very positive. There was plenty in the report about VIA's record performance (though once again lacking context to explain what some of those "records" were in comparison to), and much fanfare about new marketing efforts, awards for the railway and its president, and other ongoing initiatives. Generally speaking, a lot of the news is indeed good – system wide, revenues and passenger counts are up over last year, continuing an ongoing trend since 2013. Passenger miles are also up, and the deficit per passenger mile is down.



The Ocean crosses the Sackville River in Bedford in late February, with a "Canada 150" branded locomotive on the head end (PHOTO – Tim Hayman)

VIA's operating expenses are the highest they've been in the last 5 years, but according to the more detailed breakdown in the report, only a small component of that is actually the result of increased maintenance costs (an increase of ~\$2 million of the ~\$30 million increase), while train operations and fuel costs have actually gone down. Nevertheless, the report does note the looming challenge that is staring VIA in the face: the majority of their fleet, and particularly their intensely used Quebec City-Windsor Corridor equipment, is approaching the end of its serviceable life. Maintenance costs are projected to increase steeply in coming years, and the reliability of their operations may further decline. They have begun work on this – in 2016 they carried out some surveys of passengers and employees to determine their needs for new equipment specifications, and they submitted a formal proposal to the federal government later in the year to outline their procurement plans. That plan, along with their high frequency rail dedicated track proposal for the Corridor, is now in the hands of the federal government. It remains to be seen what funding may come, and when.

Turning to the regional perspective, this particular annual report doesn't say a whole lot for VIA's services in the Maritimes. It does give stats for the *Ocean* (see Figure 1), which mostly continue to show the same pattern of stagnant and slightly declining ridership, coupled with slight increases in revenue (no doubt thanks to fewer discounted fares over the past year) and further increases in costs that offset that revenue. The situation remains better than it was when the cuts first occurred in 2012, as it has for the past few years, but not by enough of a margin to celebrate. There is no mention of plans to improve the situation on the *Ocean*, and there is also no mention of VIA's proposed regional inter-city services between Campbellton, Moncton and Halifax (see the following story for more on this).

One positive bit of news was the reminder that the stations in Rimouski and La Poacatière, both of which had been closed following the 2012 reductions, were turned over to their respective communities for maintenance, and now have automatic mechanisms that open and close the station waiting room before train arrival. This allows them to be used, even without having VIA station staff present. The report mentions that this could serve as an example for other closed and underutilized stations. Hopefully some others, such as Amherst and Sackville, may have the option to move in this direction.

It's not yet entirely clear what sort of year 2017 will be for VIA. TAA was informed that the winter numbers were quite low for the *Ocean*, as the mild winter weather gave less incentive to opt for the train over one's car. However, May was reportedly an excellent month with several sold-out and otherwise busy trains, and July looks to be exceptionally busy with the Canada 150 celebrations (a trend across the entire VIA system). Might busier traffic through the summer help to offset the poor off-season performance? That remains to be seen.

One thing is for sure: as TAA has noted many times in the past, VIA can't expect to see any dramatic change in their Maritimes business until they make some substantial changes to their service offering – a slow, thrice weekly train only has

so much potential to draw in passengers. Without finding ways to increase frequency (either on the entire route or on inter-city segments) or improve the existing schedule (e.g. repairing the Newcastle Sub to speed up travel times between Moncton and Campbellton), there's only so much they can do.

VIA Annual Report Update

VIA's annual report for 2016 showed positive trends across the network in general, but continues to show less than stellar figures for the *Ocean*. Similar to the third quarter results, passenger totals were down compared with 2015, but revenues actually increased slightly. This may be due to changes in fare discounting (fewer sales). Costs increased by a higher margin, offsetting gains in revenue.

Year	Passengers	Revenue	Costs
2015	79,785	\$10,288,000	\$47,031,000
2016	77,613	\$10,593,000	\$49,523,000

This year's figures are still above the exceptionally poor performance in 2013 and 2014 (immediately following the frequency reduction), but remain a fraction of what they were prior to 2012.

Figure 1: Figures for ridership, revenues and costs on the *Ocean* in 2016.

-Tim Hayman

Regional rail – still no updates

Back in November of 2015, VIA President Yves Desjardins-Siciliano visited Halifax and announced during CBC Radio's Maritime Noon call-in show that VIA was planning to launch new regional inter-city train services in the Maritimes, potentially as early as the next year. Those plans were soon fleshed out through a number of interviews, public talks, and VIA materials – the plan would be to launch two new daily weekday services: between Campbellton and Moncton, and Moncton and Halifax, running eastbound on each segment in the morning and westbound in the evening. The service would ideally be run with rail diesel cars (RDCs), and the new schedules would be integrated with the *Ocean*'s 3/week schedule.

This news was greeted with cautious optimism. On the one hand, it was incredibly positive to see VIA proposing new train services in the Maritimes for the first time in decades, even if it wasn't in the form of enhancements or expansions to the *Ocean*'s schedule. On the other hand, there remained no shortage of logistical hurdles to be overcome in launching the service, from certifying equipment and setting up maintenance facilities, to negotiating track access slots from CN.

Nevertheless, VIA seemed confident that they could launch the service by the following spring.

As the months moved along, the anticipated launch date was pushed to the fall, and then subsequently to spring and then fall of 2017. Now, as we reach the summer of 2017, there is still no sign of the services launching any time soon.

VIA is no longer offering a firm timeline, and instead simply suggesting that they continue to hope to launch the services as soon as they are able. The latest update from VIA Eastern General Manager Susan Williams is that they are continuing to work with CN to make the arrangements necessary to launch the service, but that there is nothing more concrete than that yet.



VIA has maintained that plans for Maritime intercity services would be run with RDCs, but we have yet to see one even come to the region for testing. (PHOTO – Tim Hayman)

These plans were no doubt dealt somewhat of a blow earlier this year, when VIA lost a bid to purchase a group of former VIA RDCs that were for sale in Texas.

While these would have made it much easier to launch new services, Susan Williams did previously assure TAA that these plans were not contingent on acquiring new equipment, and could be facilitated with the re-allocation of VIA's existing RDC fleet. How that may work remains to be seen.

So the plans are far from dead, and there is no doubt much work that is going on behind the scenes to try to make them reality. But for the immediate future, the thrice weekly *Ocean* remains the only remaining bit of VIA service east of Québec.

-Tim Hayman

Halifax lawyer appointed to VIA Rail board



Danny Gallivan was appointed to the VIA Rail Canada board of directors on June 29.

At long last Atlantic Canada has gained representation on the board of directors at VIA Rail Canada. Daniel F. Gallivan QC was one of nine new or reappointed directors named by Transport Minister Marc Garneau on June 27.

Danny (yes, he is the son of the late Hockey Night in Canada legend) is the CEO of Cox and Palmer and a partner in the firm's Halifax office. Before being called to the Nova Scotia Bar in 1976, he obtained a law degree from Dalhousie University and an MBA from the University of Western Ontario. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1997. Danny's practice is primarily transactional, concentrating on corporate, commercial, energy, financing, securities, and public law.

Minister Garneau's announcement said the appointees "bring a wide array of technical knowledge and senior executive and corporate governance expertise" to their positions. However, none of them appear to have any relevant background in either the rail industry or passenger transportation business – which is a matter of concern to Transport Action.

TAA is pleased, however, that this region at least now has a representative at the board table, and encouraged that Mr. Gallivan has indicated a willingness to engage in dialogue on our vision for passenger rail.

Transit Link from New Brunswick South-West to Saint John Moves Closer to Implementation



After five years of hard work by the Southwest New Brunswick Transit Authority (SWNBTA), there is now a real possibility that a twice daily bus service from southern Charlotte County to Saint John will soon begin. While there had been no official announcement up to our publication deadline, informed sources indicate that all the pieces have

finally come together, the necessary funding has been approved, and Rural Lynx should soon be up and running.

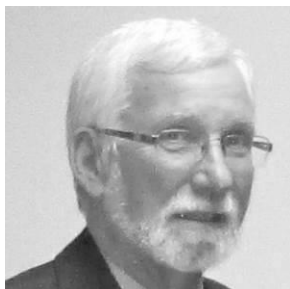
The need for affordable, accessible and available rural transportation in New Brunswick is strongly supported by many provincial studies, task forces and reports. These make clear the many benefits of public transportation. Employment opportunities, poverty reduction, access to health care and post-secondary education and training, enhanced business opportunities, tourism, age-friendly communities, social inclusion, retention of immigrants, and personal and social well-being, together with rural viability and self-sufficiency, are enabled by the provision of greater mobility for all.

Transport Action Atlantic has been deeply involved in this initiative from the outset, and it was high on the agenda in several meetings with provincial cabinet ministers. A general policy discussion in 2016 with Transportation Minister Bill Fraser led to a full presentation on Rural Lynx in Fredericton. Although direct funding from the Department of Transportation appeared unlikely, Minister Fraser and senior officials were supportive of the concept as a pilot project. In the discussion which followed the board was directed to present its proposals to the Regional Development Corporation (RDC).

In preparation for the application and presentation to RDC, funds provided by the New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) were used to contract with Orchard Group Consultants to review the business plan, the ridership potential, operational management and communications. The commitment and funding support of ESIC Vibrant Charlotte County stemming from ESIC's understanding of the need for local public transportation has been essential in sustaining the effort to establish Rural Lynx. In addition, the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission, through its executive director Frank Tenhave, has provided support and leadership with the municipalities of Blacks Harbour, Grand Manan, McAdam, Harvey, St. Stephen, St. George and Saint Andrews becoming board members and including lines for transit in their

budget planning. Further progress was made with the creation of a job description for a Rural Lynx executive director, together with collaborative arrangements with Charlotte Dial-a-Ride which will provide feeder service to the various bus stop locations. These efforts generated a grant from United Way. Accounting, audit and reporting requirements were reviewed, particularly with the objective of obtaining charitable status for SWNBTA. A further ESIC grant supported marketing, data collection and hard and software needs.

SWNBTA initiated a communications strategy to encourage support from local provincial and federal representatives. Hundreds of postcards were sent to the local MLA and Tourism Minister John Ames, who was a consistent and effective supportive voice in the provincial cabinet. In April of this year SWNBTA issued an invitation of expressions of interest from potential service providers and accepted the submission from Michael Cassidy, representing Maritime Bus. Mr. Cassidy also pursued funding from the Ministry of Transportation to establish an expanded bus transit operation in New Brunswick. Collaboration with Maritime Bus has been a positive development in the pursuit of a pilot transit service in the region. Discussions with the Energy and Utilities Board (EUB), which governs public transit service standards, have also taken place.



Former Saint Andrews mayor Stan Choptiany has been a guiding light in the campaign to restore public transit to Charlotte County.

A funding request for a pilot bus service, based on the business plan as further refined by the Orchard Group Consultants, was submitted to the RDC. The careful preparations outlined above had further enhanced corporate credibility, and resulted in a start-up grant from RDC with consideration to be given for full funding. Complete details had not been released at time of writing; an official announcement was believed to be imminent.

Through all this, the leadership and vision of the former mayor of Saint Andrews, Stan Choptiany, cannot be emphasized enough. As chair of SWNBTA from its inception, he has guided the board through the labyrinth of government funding sources while tirelessly maintaining contact with his community of potential riders. He has clearly demonstrated his belief in rural public transit as an essential public service.

TAA will continue to support this pilot as it moves to implementation. It is hoped this project will provide a template for other regions wishing to establish rural transit.

-Michael Perry

New Brunswick mayors lead by example

When public transit matters are on the agenda at municipal council meetings in two New Brunswick cities, citizens can rest assured that their mayor is going to have plenty of first-hand knowledge on the subject at hand. Because in Fredericton and Moncton, Mike O'Brien and Dawn Arnold are frequent bus riders.

Mayor O'Brien was a regular transit user in his previous day job, prior to entering politics. In fact, he says one of the factors that prompted him to first run for Council 16 years ago was a change in routes that made it no longer convenient for him to take the bus to work.

Now that he's Mayor of Fredericton, he says he's trying to lead by example, and takes the bus from his northside home to City Hall at every possible opportunity. While it might not always be as convenient as driving his own car, it's one less thing to worry about and it's certainly better for the environment, he says. In recent months he's ramped up his transit use even more.

"Riding public transit requires an attitude adjustment," he says, "because it's so easy to hop into your car to get wherever you're going, without thinking about what each individual vehicle adds to greenhouse gas or traffic congestion. And for me, riding the bus offers an opportunity to chat with some of the people who elected me – an opportunity I wouldn't get when driving my own car."

Moncton Mayor Dawn Arnold is a clean air advocate as well, who also likes to lead by example. She got on board with Codiac Transpo five years ago, as the system was trying to rebuild after a prolonged labour dispute, during her first term as a city councillor. The service had been relaunched with a completely redesigned route structure, featuring higher frequency service on most runs.

"I said to myself, this is an incredibly important service we have in our community; I really should be taking the bus. I especially enjoy it in the wintertime, not having to drive in bad conditions, not having to warm up your vehicle...and I really like the camaraderie, just chatting with people. It's very social, and you feel very connected to people."

"Did you know we were the first city in North America to have Wi-Fi on all our buses?" she asks. Sometimes she is able to get some work done during the ride downtown, but since being elected mayor last year she now finds that more and more riders want to engage in conversation. Many of them, she adds with a laugh, also ask her to pose for selfies.

Mayor Arnold does tend to ride the bus less in the summer, when she can frequently be spotted pedalling her bike down the Northwest Trail toward City Hall.

Part of the difficulty in making transit work, she says, is urban sprawl. But Moncton's Council is strongly encouraging greater population density in the city core.

"With more population density downtown, the transit system will be able to work more effectively and efficiently," Mayor Arnold says. "Right now it's tough to be all things to all people. As the city expands, if it continues to expand out, then it puts pressure on other areas. That's why the emphasis is on creating density and vibrancy downtown. And with the fast, efficient routes – blue, green and red lines – you can get all over the city quickly and easily."

And she's a firm believer in one key principle of successful public transit – frequency builds ridership. Hourly service, she insists, just isn't good enough.

For his part, Mayor O'Brien says frequency is very much a chicken-and-egg situation, and it's quite a challenge for a small city to make the investment that would be required to have better than hourly schedules. Fredericton, he notes, has "traffic moments", rather than serious traffic issues, and coupled with relatively inexpensive downtown parking, the same incentives aren't there for people to leave their cars at home as there would be in larger urban centres.

But his vision for Fredericton Transit includes gradually moving toward increased frequency, adding weekend service and express runs in certain key areas, and introducing alternative fuel vehicles. Five years from now his goal is to see eight percent of city residents using the buses. At present it's somewhere between four and five percent.

"But we're fortunate to have a good system for a city our size," he concludes, adding that research is currently underway in an effort to make it even better.

See photos on back cover.

- Ted Bartlett

Halifax Transit update

Perspective from the TAA Vice President

Halifax Transit has hit another rough spot. Ridership is down for the third successive year, and a bureaucratic foul-up has slowed the implementation of a system-wide review.

Some history: In 2013, Halifax Transit decided that rather than simply having their normal year-to-year operating plan, where they might add a route or adjust some schedules, they would like to conduct a complete review of the system. This process began very positively with consultations on principles and values that allowed citizens to identify that, for example, they were happy adding a

connection in their trip if it meant a shorter overall travel time. Similarly, more frequent departures were favoured over circuitous routes that went down more streets but were longer and less frequent. These principles were clearly articulated and approved in 2014.



**One of Halifax Transit's brand new NovaBus LFS buses, delivered earlier in 2017
(PHOTO – Tim Hayman)**

In 2015, a first draft of the plan was released. Transit advocates, led by local group It's More Than Buses and supported by Transport Action Atlantic, were generally disappointed. The plan seemed to be less ambitious than had been hoped. That might have been accepted - it did still take several important steps in the right directions - had it not been planned for implementation over five years. This implied five years of transportation chaos, where major sections of the route network would be changing every year, for apparently limited gains.

Once this draft was released, Halifax Transit conducted a second round of consultations, and revised the plan before submitting it to Council. Unfortunately, this second round only made the plan worse. Many of the steps taken to make routes simpler and more direct were reversed. Some areas that had lost service because of near-zero ridership had been restored, regardless of the economic impact to the overall system; and the plan (now with very limited benefits) was still intended for implementation over 5 years.

Unsurprisingly, when the plan came to Council in late 2016, many of the Councillors wished to add their own specific amendments. In Halifax, Councillors do not generally have the right to do so by fiat -

motions "request a staff report on the feasibility of doing X", rather than simply "doing X" outright. Then, at a later meeting when the requested staff report is presented, Councillors vote for the staff's recommendation or one of the alternatives. There were more than a dozen staff report requests. However, one item that did fall into the "Council can just order this" category was a motion from Councillor Wayne Mason to require a professional external consultant (nearly all work previous to this had been done in-house at Halifax Transit) to review the core of the plan. This was clearly intended as an elegant solution to the conflict between the advocates who generally found the plan lacking, and a Council who would probably be willing to pass the plan so long as the various concerns of individuals in their districts had been addressed.

Here's where the bureaucratic mess comes in. The official minutes of that meeting stated that Council had *directed* Halifax Transit to engage a consultant. However, the memorandum provided to Halifax Transit suggested that it wasn't a direction. Rather, the memo stated that Halifax Transit was supposed to provide a report on the *possibility* of engaging an external consultant. Thus, six months later (June 2017), Halifax Transit came back to Council saying that an external consultant wasn't necessary, and the new plan should be accepted as-is. Council, understandably, wondered where their external consultant's report was, and after an embarrassing recess, during which the clerks debated which version of history was correct, it was confirmed that Halifax Transit had been directed to engage an external consultant, and that the memos sent to them were in error.

So, now we wait more months. Halifax Transit will have to secure the services of an external consultant. Their report will have to come to Council, and Council will have to weigh in on whether they like it. This, to bring to conclusion a process of change that has already taken four years, and promises to kick off five more years of constant change.

It's More Than Buses and TAA are genuinely hopeful that this plan will eventually be a very positive change to public transit provision in Halifax. All the same, meanwhile, ridership continues to decline. With an administration that takes 9 years to make changes, is it really any surprise?

- Ashley Morton

New ferry honours Halifax Explosion hero

Halifax Transit will be receiving two new ferries over the next year, with one arriving later in 2017 and the second in summer of 2018. The new vessels will replace the ageing *Halifax III* and *Woodside I*; once they are delivered, the oldest ferry in the fleet will have been built in 2014. As they had done for the previous new deliveries, the city held a public submission and vote to choose names for the two new ferries. As it happens, one of the two names that were ultimately chosen has another transportation-related connotation: Vincent Coleman.

For those to whom the name doesn't immediately ring bells, Vince Coleman was a train dispatcher for the Canadian Government Railways (CGR) in Halifax in 1917. On the morning of December 6th, Coleman was working in the depot station near the foot of Richmond St. by Pier 6, controlling trains on the main line entering Halifax. At about 8:45am, in a chain of events that is well known to Haligonians and many Canadians farther afield, the French munitions ship S.S. *Mont-Blanc* collided with the Norwegian freighter S.S. *Imo*, and caught fire as it drifted towards the Halifax pier. Many of the onlookers near the waterfront had no idea of the imminent danger posed by the burning ship, but a sailor warned Coleman and Chief Clerk William Lovett that the ship was laden with explosives.

Coleman and Lovett initially left the depot after calling to warn the CGR terminal agent, but Coleman then returned to the telegraph office to issue warnings to incoming trains – most notably the #10 from Saint John, which was due to arrive in Halifax at 8:55am with nearly 300 passengers on board. Coleman's Morse code message read: "Hold up the train. Ammunition ship afire in harbor making for Pier 6 and will explode. Guess this will be my last message. Good-bye boys."

The #10 train was successfully stopped at Rockingham, remaining a safe distance from the explosion that would take place just after 9am. The Halifax train station at the time was located at the corner of Barrington and North streets, near the epicenter of the explosion. Had the train made it to the station, many of the passengers on board would likely have been killed.

Vince Coleman has been widely remembered for his heroic and selfless final act, and it seems incredibly fitting that a Halifax ferry will bear his name in this, the 100th anniversary year of the Halifax Explosion.

The second ferry will be named after Rita Joe, a poet and songwriter from Whycocomagh, Cape Breton, who wrote about her experiences in the residential school system, and is known as the poet laureate of the Mi'kmaq people.

-Tim Hayman

Halifax ferry heading to second life in Toronto

In other Halifax ferry news, one of the recently retired vessels, *Dartmouth III*, will be getting a new lease on life in Toronto. After having been retired in 2016 with the arrival of the new ferry *Viola Desmond*, the *Dartmouth III* was listed for sale and ultimately purchased by the Toronto Island Transit Service, which provides ferry service to the Toronto Islands. It is undergoing refit in Sambro, NS, and is expected to be ready to head for Toronto later in July. Once complete, the vessel will head from Sambro to Halifax briefly before sailing to Canso, through the causeway, down the Northumberland Strait, and along the Gulf coast to the St. Lawrence Seaway. The trip will take at least two weeks, but could take up to a month if the weather does not cooperate.

Halifax gets new buses

There are plenty of new transit vehicles on the road in several cities in the Maritimes this year. Halifax Transit is currently in the process of receiving its largest single bus order ever, with 69 new buses arriving over the first half of this year.



An ad on the side of one of Halifax Transit's new Nova buses promotes the fact that the fleet is now 100% accessible (PHOTO – Tim Hayman)

The new buses, built by Quebec-based Nova Bus, are part of an order placed in May 2016 that would give Halifax the option to receive as many as 100 of the 12-meter low-floor LFS buses over the next few years. The new vehicles already on the road have allowed Halifax Transit to retire the last of its aging fleet of GM/Nova Classics, as well as their first generation Nova low-floor buses. Adorned in the new Halifax Transit “bold attitude” scheme and sporting bright white LED destination signs, they are an undeniably eye-catching addition to the fleet. More importantly, they are more fuel efficient and (hopefully) more reliable than the ageing vehicles they replaced, and also finally provide Halifax Transit with a 100% accessible transit fleet.

Bridgewater Transit launching soon

In very positive news for residents of Bridgewater, the Town of Bridgewater has decided to set up a public transit route. An official start date has not been confirmed, but it appears that a September start date may be reasonable.

The Council of the Town of Bridgewater is to be commended for the simplicity and honesty of their statement regarding this: "...Council believes it is our obligation to the public to ensure that people from all walks of life, regardless of ability, age or income, are able to travel throughout Bridgewater in a reliable and affordable manner." I'm not sure that we at Transport Action Atlantic could have written it better!

The Town council worked with consultants CBCL and Dalhousie University to work through public consultations (Fall 2016) and arrive at a proposal as of February this year. The council accepted the idea of a pilot with a single bus in operation and a single "loop" route (though as you might guess with the geography of Bridgewater, and its two bridges close together near downtown, the route will look very much like a figure "8").



Halifax will be donating two former MetroX buses to the town of Bridgewater, similar to the ones shown here (PHOTO – Wikimedia Commons)

In looking for vehicles to serve the route, the Town very aptly noted that Halifax had a pair of appropriate buses nearing the end of their service life (a pair of GM/Glaival C5500/Titans that had been in use on the "MetroX" longer-distance commuter routes). In an act of shockingly good sense, Halifax noted that it might cost more money to go through a formal sale of the vehicles than they would actually fetch, and that the vehicles likely had several years of service remaining in them in the format that Bridgewater proposed to use them (50% of the time on each bus) - and as of Halifax's June 2017 Council meeting, the two buses have been given to Bridgewater at no charge, saving the town roughly

\$20,000-\$50,000 in start-up costs. Of course with buses that will only last for a few more years, long-term plans for the service will have to include purchases of buses. However, as a method of facilitating a quick and cost-effective start-up to the service, it's wonderful.

The plan as it is written now will be to have residents free to flag the bus at any point along its route; data from this initial flexible period will be used to consolidate into recognized bus stops as the system becomes more formal after the initial period.

As of this writing, a formal start date for the service has not been confirmed. However, it appears that the largest roadblocks have been removed, and the Town of Bridgewater is very close to making this a reality. Presuming it is in place by September, TAA may be arranging a group visit to both experience the service for our own education, and to provide our congratulations to the Town on taking such a valuable positive step.

-Ashley Morton

Moncton event centre progressing rapidly

“An amazing opportunity for public transit”

There's a new dominant feature on the Moncton skyline. The major undertaking still known generically as the “downtown events centre” is rapidly taking shape on the Main Street site formerly occupied by the Highfield Square shopping mall. To look at it from the outside, one might easily be convinced that the Moncton Wildcats would be playing their 2017-18 home games in the new facility. But that won't happen. Although construction is proceeding exactly according to plan, the official opening is actually more than a year away.

But there's a lot of talk about town about what happens when the new centre replaces the aging Moncton Coliseum as a sports and entertainment venue. Unlike the old arena, there will be very little dedicated parking in the immediate vicinity, and patrons will need to reimagine their thinking about how they get to and from major downtown events. The “car culture” just might need to take a back seat.

While there's a lot of thought being given as to how the many existing surface parking lots might be better utilized, the other dominant factor is Codiac Transpo – because Greater Moncton's main transit hub is right beside the new building.

“This is an amazing opportunity for public transit,” says Moncton Mayor Dawn Arnold. “The very best way to get to the events centre will be bus; you'll be dropped right at the front door. We're doing all the analysis, all those things are being looked at right now. We've engaged all the stakeholders, we're having a

very serious look at what the possibilities are, and we'll be putting a plan together. The centre doesn't open until September 2018, so we still have a bit of time to get those things worked out."



Moncton's new downtown events centre is rising on the site of the former Highfield Square – and the region's major transit hub is right at its doorstep. With limited parking in the immediate vicinity, there's huge potential for Codiac Transpo to assume a much larger role in the community. (PHOTO – Ted Bartlett)

Moncton isn't in the same league– hockey, basketball or otherwise – as some of Canada's major metropolitan centres. But some observers are pointing to the Toronto experience, where hordes of fans regularly ride transit to sporting events and major concerts in the downtown core. And smaller cities closer to home like Halifax and St. John's also have downtown venues where parking is limited. The message is that everybody really doesn't need to drive their own car to the sports and entertainment venue. Perhaps there's a better way!

- Ted Bartlett

Metrobus now serving St. John's airport

Passengers and workers going to and from St. John's International Airport are at long last able to use the city's transit system. After years of debate and discussion, Metrobus began servicing the airport on January 2. The air terminal is now a stop on Route 14, which also serves the city's Airport Heights area and the Memorial University campus.

Buses run from the airport and back to the university via Torbay Road and Newfoundland Drive. The trip from MUN Centre to the airport takes half an hour, on an approximate hourly frequency. The vehicle providing the service is wheelchair accessible.



Metrobus is now providing a connection to St. John's airport. (PHOTO – Ted Bartlett)

Metrobus general manager Judy Powell said expanding service to the airport was a "natural change" that will come at no additional operational cost to the City. She is expecting that the employees at the airport will be the core users, as the schedule does not accommodate air travellers with early morning departures or late night arrivals. But she added that the transit commission does have a long-term vision for the route.

Extending Metrobus to the airport had been talked about for years, but concerns about a negative effect on the taxi industry had been an obstacle. Airport taxi fares in St. John's have a reputation for being expensive, especially considering the terminal's proximity to the city centre.

Marine

Court challenge to “Terms of Union” ferry rates will be heard this fall

The case involving private sector marine carrier Oceanex, Crown-owned Marine Atlantic Inc. and Transport Canada will have its day in court beginning on October 23, 2017. The Federal Court of Canada will hear the matter in St. John's – not Toronto, where the action was originally filed. The Attorney General of

Newfoundland and Labrador, which successfully argued for the change of venue, has been granted intervener status with full privileges.

Some background: Term 32 of the Terms of Union Canada with Newfoundland, a portion of the *British North America Act*, reads:

32. (1) Canada will maintain in accordance with the traffic offering a freight and passenger steamship service between North Sydney and Port aux Basques, which, on completion of a motor highway between Corner Brook and Port aux Basques, will include suitable provision for the carriage of motor vehicles.

(2) For the purpose of railway rate regulation the Island of Newfoundland will be included in the Maritime region of Canada, and through-traffic moving between North Sydney and Port aux Basques will be treated as all-rail traffic.

(3) All legislation of the Parliament of Canada providing for special rates on traffic moving within, into, or out of, the Maritime region will, as far as appropriate, be made applicable to the Island of Newfoundland.

Rail transport on the Island of Newfoundland was terminated in October 1988.

CN Rail continued to serve Newfoundland through their rail intermodal facilities, and continued to provide freight rates as if the products used a rail network through Cape Breton, over the Cabot Strait on Marine Atlantic, and along the route of the abandoned rail tracks in Newfoundland.

ACE [Oceanex] complained to the National Transportation Agency in 1989 that the rates CN charged were too low, and asked that the rates be increased. In 1991, The National Transportation Agency found the rate structure to be valid. In 1995, CN refused to provide a ‘Terms of Union’ rate to a shipper of fish batter [flour with added salt, pepper, and other spices] despite having a ‘Terms of Union’ rate for flour, essentially the same commodity with respect to transport requirements. The shipper complained to the Canada Transportation Agency who directed CN to supply a ‘Terms of Union’ rate. CN appealed and the ruling was overturned in the Federal Court of Appeal. CN gradually eliminated ‘Terms of Union’ rates and has all but ceased to operate in the Newfoundland marketplace.

In 2016, Oceanex complained to the Federal Court in Toronto that the Marine Atlantic rates for commercial vehicles were too low and caused damage to their water carrier business between Montreal – Halifax and St. John’s. This complaint simmered for quite a few months over technical issues as to whether there existed a background paper on the Marine Atlantic rates, who had the right to participate in the hearing, and where the hearing should take place.

-Tom Beckett

The Cat came back – Season 2

Last year, following extensive controversy surrounding the ill-fated *Nova Star* ferry service between Yarmouth and Portland, the Province signed a 10-year deal with Bay Ferries Limited (BFL) to bring back a high-speed “Cat” ferry service between Nova Scotia and the northeastern United States. The first season started with some optimism – general enthusiasm from the communities involved, an improved schedule and operating model, and a more reliable ferry operator with a strong track record in the region. At the same time, it was not without its share of criticism. Some Nova Scotians were upset to see their government continuing to fund the service, particularly after substantial cost overruns and poor performance with the *Nova Star* service. The opposition Progressive Conservatives would later promise to scrap the BFL contract and come up with something better, if successful in the 2017 provincial election, though it was never entirely clear what concrete improvements they intended to make.



The high-speed Cat ferry is back for a second season (PHOTO – Tim Hayman)

The new vessel arrived, and the ferry service commenced in June of 2016. Despite some early optimism, the season ended on a sour note. The passenger totals were much lower than projected, with only 35,551 passengers and 13,064 vehicles carried by the ferry over its fifteen-and-a-half week season. The province had projected that it would carry 60,000 passengers, and by that metric it fell well short. Even by comparison to its predecessor, it was still some 15,000 passengers below the totals carried in the last year of the *Nova Star's* sailing. However,

despite the shortfall, BFL was still able to finish the year within its budget, and without additional investment from the provincial government.

One of the drawbacks identified in the Cat's first season was the shorter sailing schedule when compared to the previous ferry service. For the second season, that has been remedied – the ferry is sailing from May 31st to Oct. 15th, an extension of several weeks over its previous June 15th to Oct. 1st schedule. There have also been additional efforts to market the service, particularly in conjunction with the additional tourism business this year related to the Canada 150 celebrations and the favourable exchange rate for American visitors. As of the start of July, it seems that the extra efforts and interest may be paying off. Bookings are up considerably, and BFL indicated that bookings by the end of June had already reached 80% of their total sales for last season.

Unfortunately, the ferry service has come up against an unexpected hurdle. At the end of June, one of the engines on the vessel failed, resulting in cancelled crossings. For the time being, one crossing per week has been cancelled, and the other crossings are anticipated to take an extra hour. This will continue until repairs can be completed. BFL is confident that the manufacturer will cover the costs of repair; however, it remains unknown whether the repairs will require the vessel to be pulled from service, and when they will be complete.

-Tim Hayman

Air

Canada introduces bill of rights for air travellers

Canadians who travel by air will supposedly be getting a measure of protection against being unilaterally bumped from flights because of carrier overbooking, under legislation introduced May 16 by Transport Minister Marc Garneau. The so-called “passenger bill of rights” is supposed to prohibit the practice of denying boarding to confirmed passengers against their will.

The minister had promised action in the wake of a widely-publicized incident where a United Airlines passenger was seriously injured when he was dragged from a plane in Chicago. Mr. Garneau wrote to management of all airlines operating in Canada that such incidents would not be tolerated in this country, and later told reporters that when Canadians purchase an airline ticket they expect the carrier to keep its part of the deal.

But overbooking has become a widespread practice in the industry – one which most major carriers insist helps keep fares at lower levels through flying planes with higher load factors. Consumer advocates remain sceptical that very much will change, suggesting that the legislation will do little to end some of the nasty

scenes that happen at airports – even if they aren’t always as graphic as the recent Chicago debacle.

Take the case of Randell and Claudia Earle, a retired couple from Topsail NL, who were stranded in Lisbon by Air Canada in March, following a winter vacation in Portugal. They arrived at the check-in counter for their flight back to Canada to be informed by staff of the connecting carrier (Star Alliance partner TAP) that their tickets had been cancelled by the issuing airline. Nothing to do with them, they said – it was Air Canada’s decision.

Frantically feeding Euros into a pay phone in the terminal while their flight left without them, the Earles eventually were told that “security concerns” with their credit card had prompted the cancellation. But that story didn’t make sense, because the MasterCard statement on which the tickets appeared had been paid in full long before the couple left Canada, and no issues had been raised when they boarded their outbound flight in St. John’s a month earlier. Furthermore, the full-fare tickets they were obliged to purchase in order to get home were charged on that very same MasterCard with no questions asked.



Claudia and Randell Earle of Topsail NL had a nasty experience with Air Canada enroute home from their winter vacation in Portugal.

Those replacement tickets cost them over \$6000, and a lengthy struggle ensued in their efforts to get reimbursed for the extra airfare and direct expenses arising from the delay. After over a month of inaction from Air Canada, Mr. Earle – a retired lawyer – took his case to small claims court and enlisted the support of the CBC. The story was picked up by the Canadian Press, and widely reported by

media from coast to coast. Air Canada then quickly paid their out of pocket costs – but without apology or compensation for the inconvenience.

Reflecting on the experience, Mr. Earle noted that they had been fortunate to have sufficient credit limit to pay for the costly full-fare tickets to get home. He wondered how someone with a nearly maxed-out credit card – a not uncommon situation for many people near the end of an overseas vacation – would have managed. For their part, they will avoid using Air Canada services in future whenever reasonable alternatives exist.

- Ted Bartlett

Porter Airlines to serve Fredericton and Saint John

Air travellers to and from Saint John and Fredericton will have one more available choice, beginning in September. Porter Airlines has announced plans for direct service from both New Brunswick airports to Ottawa, continuing on to Toronto's downtown Billy Bishop Airport. The Fredericton flights are scheduled to begin September 12, while service to Saint John starts September 21. Afternoon departures are planned, with one-way fares to Toronto beginning at \$143.

At present, only Air Canada offers regular flights from Saint John to Toronto. Both Moncton and Fredericton also have WestJet service. Porter has been flying to Moncton since 2010. WestJet had earlier offered flights to Saint John, but discontinued the service in 2011.

Porter does not consider itself to be a budget carrier. On the contrary, the Toronto-based airline prides itself on the quality of service offered aboard its 74-seat Bombardier Q-400 aircraft. A spokesman said the new service is planned to appeal to both business and leisure customers.



A Porter Airlines Q400 Turboprop aircraft (PHOTO - Porter Airlines)

Obituaries

Nelson Amiro

Nelson Amiro, long time board member and former membership secretary of TAA, passed away on Feb. 24, 2017, at the age of 95, after a brief illness. A Memorial Service was held in Halifax on March 2.

Born in Middle East Pubnico he was the son of the late Irene (Amirault) and Mark Augustin Amiro. Beginning at age nine Nelson travelled weekly from his home to the N.S. School for the Blind in Halifax using CN mixed passenger trains, and thus a railfan was born.



His time at the School for the Blind opened his world to opportunities including music, gymnastics, and education. He then completed grade 12 in the public school system and went on to Dalhousie University. After graduating, he began a long career as a teacher and principal of schools in Clarke's Harbour, Liverpool, Chester Basin, Chester, and Herring Cove. While in Chester Basin he met Irene Louise McClare who became his wife of 57 years (died 2005).

Upon retirement he operated a tutoring service in Halifax. Nelson was a very accomplished organist and pianist and had a taste for classical music. A Christmas Eve tradition was a family gathering to play songs. One of his great passions was train travel. This led him to an involvement in Transport Action Atlantic. Lasting friendships resulted from this association. Nelson joined TAA (then Transport 2000) in 1981, and served as membership secretary for more than a decade. His dedication to that role was well recognized both within TAA, and at the national levels of Transport Action.

He and Irene enjoyed many trips throughout North America by train. In later years, he continued his train travel, often with family, one highlight being an Amtrak trip from Boston to New York to celebrate his 90th birthday. John Pearce (TAA President Emeritus) recalls that in retirement, Nelson and his wife Irene would take the Ocean overnight to Montreal, staying just 9 hours in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel and returning to Halifax by the next train.

Nelson's support for passenger rail will live on long after his departure this past week, and the whole organization will owe a debt of support through his work and enthusiasm.

Adapted from published obituary, with comments from John Pearce, TAA President Emeritus.

Martin Boston



Martin Cameron Boston passed away on January 30th this year in Port Hawkesbury, at the age of 79, after a lengthy illness. A memorial service was held on February 11th in the Princeville United Church, packed with his many friends and acquaintances.

Martin was well known in the local area and throughout Nova Scotia, and by the widespread railroad community, active and retired. On word of his passing, expressions of sympathy came from as far away as California. He was active in many areas, but it was his love for the railroad that defined him. The railroad was important to him. It was a business that required

his devotion and dedication; it was not just a job – it was his passion.

Martin took his job as an operator seriously. He was precise, and he understood that many peoples' lives depended on his performance. Imagine a speeding passenger train on a single-line track, with lots of opposing traffic. There could be no mistake on those train orders, and with Martin there never was. He was liked by his fellow workers, and they respected him for his dedication to his duties, concern for others, and his close attention to all the rules of railroading.

He retired from CN in 1992 after a career of 35 years with the railroad. But he really didn't retire, as he was the driving force in convincing his old employer to turn over the century-old railway station at Orangedale to him and his Save the Station committee. There they established a first-class railroad museum with the station itself, a yard of rolling stock, and shelves of railroad memorabilia including train orders, timetables, log books and just about anything else he could find. Martin himself, in his smart conductor's uniform, his wealth of railroad knowledge, and his friendly greeting was an icon as he waved to passengers on the *Bras d'Or*, welcomed visitors, and told stories of the good old days of railroading on his Cape Breton Island. He managed the museum until a year or so before his death – until ill health took him away.

- David Gunn

Editor's Note: Martin was a charter member of Transport 2000 when the Atlantic chapter was established in 1977. Martin expressed his dedication and love for the Orangedale museum to me one day in this way. "Don, when I worked, I worked five days a week and had two days off. Now that I am retired to the museum, I work seven days a week and have no days off, but I love it." And that was Martin.

- Don MacLeod

Meet a Member

Tom Beckett



In addition to being a wine connoisseur, Tom Beckett brings a wealth of background in transportation policy and planning to TAA's board of directors

Tom received an Honours BA [geography and English] from the Queen's University of in 1970, and earned a M. Sc. [transportation engineering] from the University of New Brunswick in 1986.

He began his career as an environmental planner with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation in 1971, moving to St. John's, Newfoundland, in 1978 as director of planning and research for the Department of Transportation. In 1986 Tom was appointed director of policy and planning, and in 2001 became the deputy registrar of motor vehicles.

Much of Tom's career in Newfoundland was involved with negotiations with Transport Canada regarding funding for highways. In 1990 and again in 1995, he worked to defend the Terms of Union rail freight rates provided by CN Rail. He was instrumental in developing legislation mandating the use of seat belts in 1983, and in the 24-hour roadside suspension for BAC levels in excess of 0.05% in 1986. Tom worked alongside Marine Atlantic in 1994 to take the South Coast marine service under provincial responsibility, and subsequently with Transport Canada officials to bring the Labrador marine services to the Province, with funding to construct the Trans Labrador Highway.

In 1999-2000 Tom chaired an ad hoc national committee reporting to the Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety to put in place the foundation upon which the provinces, Transport Canada, and Environment Canada established a nation-wide network of advanced road weather information stations [RWIS].

Tom retired from the Government of Newfoundland Labrador in 2012, and is now serving on the TAA board of directors where his career background makes him a unique policy resource. He also operates Beckett on Wine, providing wine education and related consulting; co-manages the Belbin's Cheese Club offering a monthly selection of fine cheese; and administering the Newfoundland Labrador Artisanal and Craft Beer Club – bringing good beer to great people province-wide.

Tom is married to Maureen Healey-Beckett and resides in St. John's.

Moncton and Fredericton mayors are transit champions



Moncton Mayor Dawn Arnold is multi-tasking with cellphone and tablet as she rides towards City Hall on a Codiac Transpo bus. (PHOTO – Serge Martin)



A strong interest in public transit was one of the factors that led Mike O'Brien into municipal politics 16 years ago. Mayor of Fredericton since last year, his goal is to get more citizens in the habit of riding the buses – and he leads by example. (PHOTO – City of Fredericton)