

The Bulletin

TRANSPORT ACTION ATLANTIC

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What's ahead for the Halifax rail cut?

Not commuter rail anytime soon!



VIA Rail's tri-weekly train 15 heads into the Halifax cut on August 2, 2019. The century-old infrastructure is expected to see some changes in the near future, but commuter rail service isn't likely to be among them. Our coverage begins on p. 9

(PHOTO – Tim Hayman)



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VIA's Ocean crosses over to the main line as it exits the rail cut by Fairview. The fact that this line was once fully double tracked is acutely evident here. Will plans to move more containers from Halterm by rail mean restoring this capacity? Story on p. 9

Advocacy in Action

Sustainable transportation as an election issue

As the 2019 federal election draws ever closer, it's becoming increasingly apparent that climate change and the factors that influence it are becoming key issues for voters. Transportation is acknowledged to be a major contributor to greenhouse gases, and the opportunity has never been better for Transport Action's sustainable agenda to make its presence felt in a federal campaign. During the national AGM and board meeting held in Ottawa in May, a decision was made to prepare a series of policy briefings for distribution to parties and candidates during the campaign. Transport Action Atlantic has produced three of these documents, as they apply specifically to our region, and we've also been involved with several others that have nation-wide implications, including intercity motorcoach and long-haul passenger rail.



Terry Johnson (l.) succeeded Bruce Budd as president of Transport Action Canada at the annual general meeting in Ottawa on May 25. Terry is committed to vigorously pursuing an affordable and sustainable transportation agenda in this year's federal election campaign.

TAC's new president Terry Johnson is committed to vigorously promoting these policy documents, as we seek to have the federal parties or individual candidates adopt them as part of their respective platforms. For its part, TAA has identified its three key issues as (a) increased and improved VIA Rail service in our region, (b) fair and affordable ferry rates on the constitutional Marine Atlantic route to Newfoundland, and (c) the rescue of the dormant rail line on Cape Breton Island, which now faces the

threat of final abandonment. All three fall within the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada. The documents, under the common theme *Ideas in Motion*, are reproduced here, and will also appear on the TAA and TAC websites.

a) A vision for renewed VIA Rail service in the Maritimes



Passenger rail in Atlantic Canada today is a sorry remnant of what it used to be. For the past three decades it has been declining at a more precipitous rate than elsewhere in the VIA Rail system. In fact, portions of the Quebec City-Windsor corridor have, in recent years, seen significant improvement in both frequency and capacity.

The most recent setback for VIA's Maritime service came in October 2012, when the frequency of the region's sole remaining train was cut to just three times weekly, under the guise

of being an "improvement" to better meet the public demand. VIA's then-CEO was insistent that the Ocean was primarily a tourism product – completely ignoring the realities of local needs and travel patterns. The train has suffered significant ridership losses and increasing operating costs since the cutback. VIA is now paying more to operate fewer trains, and its most recent corporate plan acknowledges that passengers in the Maritimes are being poorly served by the current schedule.

The tri-weekly operation eliminated the possibility of same-day returns to the Maritimes from Montreal, and one-day round trips to Moncton for residents of New Brunswick's North Shore – an important consideration for people who have few other public transportation options. The lack of frequency also rules out rail as a choice for weekend travel, and it limits its usefulness when severe winter conditions make other forms of transportation unreliable or impossible.

Frequency and reliability are key components to making passenger rail service viable. Transport Action Atlantic believes that a daily Ocean with equipment appropriate to meet market demand at different times of the year would be the most effective way to serve communities all along the route, as well to provide a quality seasonal tourism product.

The 2018 federal budget allocated funding for VIA to replace its entire Quebec City-Windsor corridor fleet, and an order for new trains has been placed with Siemens. This is an important step, but VIA's long distance equipment used on trains outside the Corridor is aging and in urgent need of replacement. A refurbishment program is underway for much of this stainless steel "Heritage Fleet" – some of which is more than 70 years old and has already been rebuilt several times. But there is concern that this is not sufficient as a long-term solution. The British-built Renaissance equipment currently used on the Ocean is nearing the end of its service life, and when it is removed there will likely not be

sufficient capacity to meet peak season demand. The time has come to place priority on investigating options for new long distance rolling stock.

Extensive market research should guide both the acquisition of new passenger cars and refurbishment of the existing fleet. A variety of accommodation and onboard amenities should be available to accommodate various travel budgets, including an enhanced economy service for those willing to pay extra for additional comfort and personal space without the luxury pricing of sleeper class. Simply put, the product should meet the needs of the marketplace.

There is also the issue of track infrastructure. The total Montreal-Halifax travel time for the Ocean today is longer than it was in the era of steam locomotives – largely due to the deteriorated condition of CN’s Newcastle Subdivision in northern New Brunswick. Passenger train speed is limited to just 30 miles per hour on a lengthy stretch of track where 70 mph was safely permitted less than 20 years ago. Federal investment several years ago was meant to improve the track, but the money has been spent and speeds have not been restored. Furthermore, there are frequent delays due to reduced siding capacity, particularly between Moncton and Halifax. Clearly, more investment is required, but in so doing the infrastructure owner needs to be held to account to ensure the outcome meets the intended objectives.

Canada does not end at Quebec City! Canadians outside of the corridor also deserve investment in modern passenger rail equipment and services.

b) Affordable Newfoundland ferry rates – a constitutional commitment



It’s now been 70 years since Newfoundland and Labrador became Canada’s tenth province, completing Confederation from sea to sea. Transportation was a key concern for the people who designed the Terms of Union – and cost was an essential factor. Accordingly, Term 32 obligated Canada to provide a federally-supported ferry service between North Sydney and Port aux Basques, and provided assurance against the higher cost of living resulting from geography. Specifically, framed in conformity with the dominant transportation mode of the day, the 100-nautical-mile crossing of the Cabot Strait was to be rated as an all-

rail movement. The additional handling and operational costs of the ferry service were to be absorbed by the Government of Canada through Crown-owned Canadian National Railways.

Much has changed in the intervening years. The narrow-gauge Newfoundland rail line was abandoned in 1988; the railway passenger service on the island had been discontinued two decades previously. Traffic on the “constitutional” ferry route is now all highway-based. But the basic principle of Term 32 remains. While road has replaced rail, the ferry service operated by the federal Crown corporation Marine Atlantic Inc. (MAI) must be viewed in the contemporary sense as an extension of the Trans Canada Highway. If the spirit in which the Terms of Union were drafted is to be respected, vehicles crossing the Cabot Strait should be charged no more than the cost of driving them 180 kilometres by highway. Arguably, there should be no charges for commercial drivers or the occupants of passenger vehicles. It is significant that these additional costs do not apply to users of the Confederation Bridge to Prince Edward Island, which is also a constitutional obligation of the Government of Canada.

Over time, the best intentions of the latter-day Fathers of Confederation have been eroded. In the past two decades Marine Atlantic’s rates have more than doubled – an increase greater than three times the national inflation rate. Security fees and fuel surcharges have also been added. Notably, there are no such additional costs to users of the Confederation Bridge, where tolls are tied to the cost of living index.

Under the previous Conservative government, Transport Canada imposed a cost recovery target of 65% on MAI. This has remained unchanged under the current Liberal administration – despite a campaign commitment in 2015 that termed the existing cost recovery requirement as “unreasonable” and pledged to address it if elected. It’s a promise that has not been fulfilled, and ferry rates have continued to rise in excess of the inflation rate.

Transport Action Atlantic believes the spirit of the Terms of Union that made Newfoundland and Labrador a part of Canada should be respected, and that Term 32 must be viewed in a modernized context. The ferry crossing of the Cabot Strait is part of the Trans Canada Highway, and should cost users no more than driving the equivalent distance by road. This is an obligation assumed by the Government of Canada in 1949, and remains as valid today as it did then – notwithstanding the passage of time and changes in transportation technology.

A recent recommendation by the House of Commons Transportation Committee to further study the concept of an undersea tunnel crossing of the Strait of Belle Isle should not be used as reason to delay addressing the ferry rate issue. Even if a “fixed crossing” between Newfoundland and the mainland is demonstrated to be feasible, its construction would lie many years in the future. Today’s ferry rates, by the Prime Minister’s own admission, are much higher than they should be – and immediate action is required.

c) Cape Breton needs rail service



The potential for restoration of rail freight service to Cape Breton Island remains strong – and the Government of Canada has an obligation to shoulder its share of responsibility. Nearly five years after the last freight train ran over the 96-mile section of the former CN Sydney Subdivision, the Province of Nova Scotia

continues to pay the current owner of the line, US-based Genesee and Wyoming Corporation, a monthly allowance of up to \$60,000. This covers such expenses as salaries, insurance, security and building maintenance directly attributed to the line between St. Peter's Junction and Sydney, in return for which G&W will not apply to remove the track.

Recent indications are that the provincial government is not planning to renew this arrangement beyond the current fiscal year – unless there's substantial progress toward a proposed marine container terminal in the Sydney area. But there's so much more to consider than just the international shipping business.

Originally built at taxpayer expense, this rail line was a public asset for over 100 years, and when Crown-owned CN turned it over to the initial private operator in 1993, its then-CEO gave assurance in writing to the premier of Nova Scotia assuring continuing rail service in the event the new arrangement didn't work out. The subsequent privatization of CN did not simply make that commitment go away. If it's no longer an obligation of the railway company, then the Government of Canada must accept responsibility for a commitment made by the Crown corporation's CEO on its behalf.

The traffic that previously moved on the railway has been forced to use an inadequate highway system, with serious environmental and safety implications, not to mention the maintenance burden placed on the Province as a result of damage to infrastructure caused by heavy transport trucks. The Nova Scotia government also faces growing pressure for extremely expensive highway twinning – at far greater cost than the modest investment required to place the rail line back in service.

It is Transport Action Atlantic's position that the federal government should begin by reacquiring the line for net salvage value, and turn it over to the Province with a commitment from the New Canada Building Fund sufficient to restore it to Class 3 condition. Nova Scotia would then engage a willing and competent operator. A further infrastructure investment in several small intermodal facilities at strategic locations would enable traffic to both Cape Breton and western Newfoundland to be transported by rail in a more environmentally sustainable manner, while substantially reducing the maintenance burden on highway infrastructure and enhancing road safety.

Preserving the rail line could also allow the possibility of re-establishing passenger rail to Cape Breton at some point in the future. The Halifax-Sydney route operated by VIA Rail prior to 1990 was a well-patronized service, and could be a part of a policy to expand passenger rail across the country. Such an initiative would be fundamentally limited to areas where tracks still exist.

Governments do not need to be in the business of operating railways, but they should be establishing policies and making financial commitments that encourage more – not less – of Canada's commercial traffic to move by rail.

Maritime Bus owner wins 2019 John Pearce Award



Mike Cassidy, president and owner of Maritime Bus, (left) accepts the John Pearce Award for 2019 from TAA president Ted Bartlett.

Transport Action Atlantic has selected Prince Edward Island entrepreneur Mike Cassidy as the winner of the 2019 John Pearce Award. The citation was created by the association two years ago to commemorate the lifetime achievements in public transportation advocacy by Mr. Pearce, a founding father of TAA's predecessor Transport 2000 Atlantic, a past president, and long-time member of the board. John passed away in Dartmouth NS on June 6, 2019.

The award is given annually to recognize an outstanding contribution to the public transportation cause. This year's

selection committee chose to recognize Mr. Cassidy primarily for his determined efforts to rescue and maintain scheduled intercity motorcoach service in the Maritimes. In the fall of 2012, his company stepped in where others had failed, and is now in its seventh year of successful passenger and parcel operation from Halifax and Sydney NS to Rivière-du-Loup QC, serving most towns and cities in the region on a daily basis and providing onward connections to Quebec and Ontario. The citation also noted his success in providing urban transit in Charlottetown PEI, and his ongoing advocacy seeking government support for a national bus network in Canada, following the failure of Greyhound West.

Changes coming to Halifax rail operations

Federal funding will see freight expansion, but what does it mean for passenger rail?



New funding will see changes to the rail facilities at Fairview Cove, and rail shuttles replacing the bulk of truck traffic going to and from Halterm. What adjustments will be made to the rail line to accommodate this remain to be seen.

(PHOTO - Tim Hayman)

There have been a number of significant developments this year related to the rail cut through the south end of Halifax, which provides access to the south end container terminal (Halterm) and the VIA Rail station. These developments seem to bode well for moving more freight in and out of the south end by rail instead of over busy downtown streets, but the outlook for passenger rail service is not nearly as positive.

In our last issue we reported on news that CN had placed a bid to purchase the south end Halifax container terminal, with dreams of turning it into a “Prince Rupert of the East”. Since then, news broke that CN’s bid was unsuccessful, with the majority stake in Halterm instead going to Singapore’s PSA International Pte

Ltd. While CN's acquisition would likely have resulted in an increased focus on moving goods to and from the port by rail, another recent development emerged that should ensure that there will be increased freight traffic going to and from Halterm by rail, even if much of it will only go as far as the Fairview container terminal.

On June 2, Transport Minister Marc Garneau was in town along with local MP Andy Fillmore and Mayor Mike Savage to announce \$47.5 million in funding for two related projects: the first will see rail improvements to allow the bulk of truck traffic from Halterm to be carried by rail shuttle to the Fairview container terminal; the second will involve a complete redesign of the Windsor St. exchange, the busy intersection that forms one of the major access points to the peninsula as well as truck access to the terminal. The road redevelopment will be necessary to accommodate the increased truck traffic at that terminal, but should also be an opportunity to improve traffic flow and add transit priority and active transportation infrastructure at the same time. Both projects are to begin the design phase now, with construction to begin in 2020. The total cost of the project is expected to be near to \$100 million, with the city, the Port of Halifax, and CN contributing the remaining amounts.

The announcement and media reports after the fact have been sparse on details about what rail changes might be involved. An expanded facility and new cranes will apparently be added at Fairview to accommodate the shuttle trains, but will there be additional track capacity added in the cut? Space for double track exists through much of the right of way, though adjustments might be required to accommodate double-stacked containers. Will any sort of signaling be installed? Will the track approach to access the Fairview terminal be redesigned? The requirements may depend on how many shuttle trains will be run in addition to CN's typical service from Halterm.

If no additional capacity is added, the extra freight traffic could well cause additional delays for VIA's service running to and from the downtown station. Might this have any impact on VIA's plans to run additional daily regional trains, or any other possibility of expanding VIA service to Halifax? We now know, as reported on the next page, that CN's intransigence has killed Halifax's commuter rail plans. Freight congestion is the reason for chronic delays across the VIA system. While there's no doubt that moving trucks off of downtown streets and putting more traffic on rail is a good thing on many fronts, the potential negative effects on passenger service are worth keeping an eye on.

There is also the continuing uncertainty about VIA's access to the Halterm loop track, which it relies on to turn the Ocean. Despite a mediated agreement that gave a temporary reprieve, VIA is still set to lose access to that track in November 2020. Halterm is embarking on a substantial expansion of the south end terminal, which could very well result in the loss of that track altogether. How VIA plans to remedy this situation remains unknown.

-Tim Hayman

CN derails Halifax commuter service plans

The dream of commuter rail in Halifax has been shattered once again – at least for the foreseeable future. The Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) voted unanimously on June 18 not to further pursue a proposal that aimed to establish service on the existing CN right-of-way from Windsor Junction into the downtown VIA Rail station. VIA had made an unsolicited bid to work with Halifax on the initiative some three years ago, and there were tentative indications of support from both the federal and provincial governments. HRM had even budgeted for staff to work specifically on setting up commuter rail over the coming years.

The sticking point, however, was the unwillingness of CN to come to the table. Councillor Tim Outhit, who represents the bustling suburb of Bedford, was the most ardent proponent of commuter rail – but even he recognized the futility of proceeding any further when faced with the railway company's intransigence.

But Councillor Outhit isn't reluctant to place the blame for the failure where he believes it belongs. CN was quite willing to accept public funding for the necessary upgrades to accommodate commuter trains, he says, but they weren't prepared to budge on the issue of dispatching the upgraded track. Without co-operation from CN to facilitate effective schedules and ensure reasonable on time performance, commuter rail would be doomed to fail.

So yet again, commuter rail returns to the back-burner. There's little doubt that the issue will arise again, as traffic congestion continues to worsen on the Bedford Highway and the city continues to look at more efficient and sustainable transportation options; but unless CN has a change of heart and decides to co-operate, it won't happen any time soon.

VIA's Ocean faces peak-season equipment crunch

Deteriorating Renaissance consists force unusual arrangements

It is no secret at this point that the Renaissance equipment, VIA's second-hand train fleet originally built for service between the UK and Europe, is operating on borrowed time. Corrosion issues and high maintenance costs have left the cars flagged for an early retirement, and much of the fleet has been stored and slowly deteriorating since the Ocean's frequency was cut to 3 trains a week in 2012. A string of incidents over the winter forced even more equipment to be withdrawn, at least temporarily, and this has created issues with equipment availability.

VIA left one train of stainless steel HEP equipment in service through the later winter and spring, and with summer approaching, it became clear that HEP equipment would still need to cover for one of the Ocean's train sets. The other complication, however, was that VIA is currently short on other equipment – several diners are in for maintenance and refurbishment, and with the Canadian running at peak length (and still requiring four sets of equipment, despite the third frequency only running between Vancouver and Edmonton), there isn't much to go around. So the HEP set has turned into a “mixed” consist, with HEP baggage and coaches up front and Chateau sleepers and Park car to the rear, and a block of Renaissance equipment sandwiched in the middle – this includes a coach, service cars, dining car, sleepers, and transition cars on either end (**you can see this mixed set in the cover image of this Bulletin*). This solves the dining car issue, provides more consistent meal preparation for crews, and also maintains the accessible coach and sleeper spaces that have been added to the Renaissance fleet.

According to VIA's reservation system, this arrangement is now slated to continue through to the end of the year, with a mixed HEP/Renaissance set showing up until after Christmas. At this rate, it seems quite possible that the Ocean will never return to all-Renaissance operation before the equipment is withdrawn altogether. Without a plan to replace the Renaissance fleet, VIA will be faced with serious equipment shortages as they are forced to equip the Ocean with HEP equipment year round.

-Tim Hayman

HFR is high on new VIA CEO's agenda

A new CEO has taken charge at VIA Rail Canada. Cynthia Garneau is the first woman to head the Crown corporation in its 41-year history; her first day in her new role was May 9. In a move that took many industry observers by surprise, her appointment was announced by Transport Minister Marc Garneau (no relation – Transport Canada officials were quick to point out) in late March. She replaced Yves Desjardins-Siciliano on the expiry of his five-year term, but his signature project is clearly high on her agenda.

Ms. Garneau is a newcomer to the rail and passenger transportation business, but has extensive background in the aerospace industry. She served in leadership roles in supply chain management, public affairs and government relations, business planning and production engineering with Bell Helicopter Textron Canada, before being promoted to president of the company in 2016. Previously she was employed at Bombardier Aerospace. Like her predecessor, she also has a legal background, and has been a member of the Quebec bar since 1994.

Speaking at VIA's annual public meeting less than three weeks after taking office, she made it clear that the momentum of the high frequency rail and dedicated tracks proposal will continue on her watch. She was front and centre at a June 25

media event in Trois-Rivières, where approval of the next step in the initiative was announced by Minister Garneau and Infrastructure Minister François-Philippe Champagne.



VIA's new CEO Cynthia Garneau (r.) joined Transport Minister Marc Garneau (l.), Infrastructure and Communities Minister François-Philippe Champagne, and Canada Infrastructure Bank CEO Pierre Lavallée for a June 25 announcement in Trois-Rivières about the next phase of the high frequency rail proposal.

The Canada Infrastructure Bank has committed \$55 million toward the \$71-million total cost of further exploring the feasibility of VIA's HFR proposal for the Toronto-Quebec City corridor. The plan calls for a mostly-dedicated higher-speed passenger right-of-way, that would not be vulnerable to the increasingly problematic delays caused by freight operations. The route would include a lightly-used former CP line along the north shore of the St. Lawrence through Trois-Rivières and a long-abandoned CP route between Perth and Havelock, Ontario, as well as trackage already owned by VIA. Specifically mentioned in the announcement was the government expectation of "interoperability" with local and regional transit providers, noting in particular access to the Mount Royal tunnel in Montreal.

It is clear from the announcement that much remains to be done before VIA's plan can receive a clear signal from Ottawa. The further exploratory work, which involves creating a joint project team, is described as a "responsible next step" toward a final decision – one which is undoubtedly several years in the future.

Ms. Garneau says HFR is part of VIA's transformation "towards a more modern passenger service for a more connected, more sustainable and more mobile Canada." Whether that vision extends east of Quebec City remains to be seen, but Transport Action Atlantic is seeking an opportunity to for an early discussion with the new CEO.

-Ted Bartlett

Rural transit pilot in NB ends ...but promoters not ready to give up

The rural transit pilot project in New Brunswick's Charlotte County, launched amid high hopes and considerable fanfare less than two years ago, has ground to a halt – at least for now. The daily bus to Saint John, branded as RuralLynx, made its final trip on May 31. Over 3300 passengers had used the service over the 20 months it ran, but it did not attain the commercially viable ridership needed to operate without continued government investment – which wasn't forthcoming. The pilot identified many complex transportation needs for small municipalities and rural areas, with the bus service addressing only part of the local requirements.

The Board of the Southwest NB Transit Authority Inc., however, isn't prepared to throw in the towel just yet. Believing there is a need for service between the rural communities and the major urban centre in the area, they are looking for alternatives. The Board recently received a substantial New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund Grant and has just issued a request for proposal to develop business ready transit plans for St. Andrews, St. Stephen and rural areas in Charlotte County. Proposals are being sought from local parties who might be interested in providing small on-demand, last mile service, but are concerned they might not be able to do it alone. The SWNBTAI says it has developed a lot of expertise about the transportation needs of the area, and is prepared to share the lessons learned without obligation to any groups or individuals that might be interested in starting a replacement for the daily bus. Other sources of funding are also being sought.

-with files from Stan Choptiany

Mixed messages in Fredericton's new municipal plan

A new municipal plan entitled "Imagine Fredericton" has just been released in draft form for public comment. While most of the plan deals with urban structure and land use, there is a section on mobility and transportation which envisages an integrated transportation network which will facilitate a range of transportation choices such as "...walking, cycling, public transit and driving".

The position of "driving" as last on this list gives the impression that all the other modes will have precedence. This appears to be given further emphasis in this statement: "There will be viable choices for moving around the City, including by

public transit, cycling, and walking, in addition to the automobile.” Again, the impression is given that driving a personal car will be given lower priority. The plan declares that, “the transit system will be easy and convenient to use and comfortable for those who rely on it or choose to use it.” Transit riders also use sidewalks, and here the plan makes a further declaration: “Streetscapes will be designed or improved to feel safe and comfortable for pedestrians and to encourage walking.” Further, “the City’s public realm will be designed and maintained so that the main pedestrian thoroughfares and other well-used pedestrian connections are usable and safe,” in all seasons.



(PHOTO – Ted Bartlett)

There then follows a somewhat cursory nod to the environment and climate change with the vague undertaking that: “the City’s carbon footprint will be reduced over time.” Given the fact that some city councils have recently declared “climate emergencies”, this is a rather passive undertaking, and somewhat surprising when Fredericton has recently experienced two successive years of severe floods.

Key statements about land use relating to transit include limiting sprawl and concentrating residential growth within the urban core through intensification and infilling. Development growth beyond the “Growth Boundary”, delineated by the extent of existing municipal water and wastewater services, will not be permitted except by an amendment to the Municipal Plan. An average residential density of 40 people per hectare is anticipated. These land use provisions which should

reduce urban settlement sprawl will help to make the provision of public transit more efficient and economical.

Within the “urban core” the plan declares that the principle of “pedestrians first” will apply to all design and capital works, and concerns about the impact on vehicle traffic and speed shall be given lesser weight than the benefits to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. For example, there will be more protected cycling infrastructure and provision of sidewalks on both sides of the street. Reference is made to the recently released Fredericton Transit Plan, (see the previous issue of *The Bulletin*) to, “...guide the provision of an efficient, affordable, safe, and convenient transit system that will link major employment, commercial, residential, and recreation areas and strive to meet the needs of all transit users.” Any new developments should be located near transit routes, and areas of major employment must provide adequate transit facilities to accommodate and encourage transit use such as bus lay-bys, transit shelters, and transit stops.

Public transit service should be expanded and “prioritize” increased frequency as well as improving service in mixed-use areas, higher density residential areas, and commercial corridors.

If this “Vision for the Future” is to be successfully implemented, a major “sea change” will have to take place in the attitude of the present Fredericton City Council which, in both words and action, is staunchly car-centric. There is currently major roundabout construction under way with two more planned, all to facilitate greater traffic flow. The demand for more parking is a constant refrain, even though there are extensive areas within the city given over to this purpose. A planned bike route along a principal downtown street was stopped by the Council because local merchants claimed that it would restrict parking.

The only municipal councillor to so far react to the release of this new plan phoned a local radio station to advocate for a third bridge connecting north and south Fredericton. The construction of a third bridge was tentatively proposed in the municipal plan, but only if the city’s population grew to that projected over a thirty-year period. This council member wanted the bridge built within ten years, discounting the plan’s overall emphasis on discouraging car use in favour of alternative transport. It has been estimated that the private car is a principal contributor to greenhouse gas production in New Brunswick, and for this to change, alternative less-polluting transportation must be offered in a meaningful way.

Transportation choice for both freight and passengers is already restricted owing to the fact that Fredericton is the only mainland provincial capital in Canada without either freight or passenger railway service. The city transit service, with a service frequency of only one bus an hour and no service on Sundays or holidays, and buses with hard seats and grimy interiors in need of a deep clean, appears to be provided as a municipal afterthought. It requires a major upgrade.

Even accessing the bus can be hazardous. On many roads with bus routes sidewalks exist only on one side of the street. Where sidewalks do not exist, people waiting for the bus are forced into the street. This becomes particularly dangerous in winter, when high snowbanks narrow the road. Sidewalks in Fredericton become glaciers from the first heavy snowfall until spring. High snowbanks at bus stops become major obstacles to bus access, limiting winter transit to only the most able and physically fit. While the traffic speeds by on dry black top, pedestrians are forced to slither and slide on the icy sidewalks. Timely snow clearance using appropriate equipment could solve this problem, but again the Council's priority seems to be on the unimpeded movement of traffic. Annual complaints have gone unheeded. The provision of adequate and convenient pedestrian crosswalks, the creation of safer pedestrian access to shopping malls, and more traffic calming methods would all help to make Fredericton a more pedestrian friendly city and encourage the use of alternative transport, including transit.

Recently, the results of a Forum Research poll on Canadian political issues was published in the Toronto Star. The results were surprising. For the first time the environment topped both health care and the economy as issues of major importance to Canadians. This may be the first signal that a shift in public attitudes is taking place. Perhaps this shift will be reflected in the attitude of the next Fredericton municipal council. One can only hope!

-Michael Perry

How far is New Brunswick along the road of service-centered mobility?

From Surfaces to Services revisited

In 2017, the advisory committee I had chaired proposed a provincial strategy to New Brunswick in order to increase the availability of inclusive and sustainable transportation options. The strategy was commissioned and continues to be championed by the province's Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC). While increasing shared and active transportation options stands to benefit the majority of the population, they are particularly beneficial to those for whom single occupancy cars is a financial or physical burden (youth, elderly, people with a handicap, new Canadians, etc.). The provincial government tabled the strategy and its 31 recommendations in the Legislature in December 2017. Over the following months, an inter-department committee fleshed out the 31 recommendations further, prioritized them, and submitted them as a memo to cabinet in September 2018. New Brunswick now had a policy architecture in place to accelerate a shift towards more inclusive and sustainable transportation services.

At first glance, it may seem the strategy has lost some momentum after the austerity-minded Higgs government took power in November 2018; however in my earnest opinion it is not a question of whether but rather how fast New Brunswick pivots towards transportation services.

First, the strategy was commissioned originally by the PCs when David Alward was Premier, so it has long been a bipartisan initiative. More importantly, the strategy gives careful attention to the fact that inclusive transportation saves money on households (e.g. the burden of owning multiple vehicles). It increases our economy's performance: reduces congestion, improves private sector's ability to fill job vacancies, helps our economy retain youth and new Canadians. It helps government's ability to curb expenditures. Take healthcare for instance. Shared and active transportation options reduce missed doctor appointments, decreases accident-related deaths and injuries, while reducing the need to treat preventable diseases such as heart disease. No matter the political stripe, governments increasingly recognize it is cheaper to provide transportation alternatives than *not* to have them, and saving money should be music to Higgs' ears.

Above all, many recommendations have already been implemented! Some will take time to be felt. For instance, Transportation Impact Assessments (TIAs) provide a lens to ensure siting decisions such as locating new schools or large-scale developments don't cost more in transportation costs, even if they may seem to save on real estate costs. Reaping the benefits of better land use decisions takes time. Taking another example, some Regional service commissions in the southeast and southwest part of the province have since stepped up their transportation planning game, although mandates and resources vary widely across provinces. We also see differentiated service levels across the province. Charlotte County has long bushwhacked the trail for community transportation in New Brunswick and remains the leader in the province. However, since the strategy was tabled there have been new regional initiatives that span almost the entire province, and existing initiatives in Kent County and the Acadian Peninsula are increasing the reach of their transportation services.

All told, at least half the recommendations have been implemented or are being worked upon. However, do not look mainly at province-wide initiatives, but rather provincially-enabled local initiatives: e.g. integrating on-demand services with new scheduled services. Getting the provincial government to recognize its stake in the game is important, but where the rubber hits the road is really at the local community and regional levels, how people make trips every day. Five years out, will we have improved people's ability to travel within regions to access work, healthcare, school, shopping, leisure and other quality of life essentials?

-Yves Bourgeois

Transit on the agenda at TAA's AGM



Ashley Morton moderates an in-depth discussion on urban, rural and intercity transit in Atlantic Canada at TAA's annual general meeting in Halifax on May 11. Panellists (left to right) were Maritime Bus president Mike Cassidy, Mayor David Mitchell of Bridgewater NS, and Stan Choptiany, chair of the Southwest New Brunswick Transit Authority.

Marine

NL Ferry rates back in Federal Court

The latest installment of a legally-complex, somewhat bizarre, but potentially serious aspect of the Newfoundland ferry rate issue was played out in a St. John's courtroom on May 28 and 29. Three justices of the Federal Court of Canada heard a petition by private marine freight carrier Oceanex for leave to appeal a ruling handed down last year by Judge Cecily Strickland. That judgement had rejected the controversial argument by Oceanex that the subsidized ferry rates were detrimental to its business, seeking to end the alleged unfair competition. Of course, most observers – including Transport Action Atlantic – maintain that the rates charged by Crown-owned Marine Atlantic are already too high, and inconsistent with the intent of the Terms of Union that brought Newfoundland into Confederation 70 years ago.

The Government of Canada, Marine Atlantic Inc., and the Government of Newfoundland Labrador opposed the granting of leave. The Government of Canada's legal counsel insisted Judge Strickland erred in granting standing on the matter to Oceanex, as the company was not acting in the best interests of the public but rather in self interest.

Oceanex specifically asked the court to determine whether the federal Minister of Transport needs to take due regard of the policy declaration in Section 5 of the National Transportation Act – not to set the Marine Atlantic rates nor determine the amount of subsidy. All three intervenors pointed out the section is a declaration within which to apply the act, and there is no compulsion for the minister to explicitly use the section.

The Government of Newfoundland Labrador also expressed:

- In their attempt to eliminate or reduce the subsidy, Oceanex has failed to show harm as they have increased market share in recent years.
- The Competition Bureau declined to investigate the matter.
- The price/demand function must be kept in mind with respect to “traffic offering”, as the Terms of Union expect an accessible and affordable rate structure.
- The ferry has not been profitable other than in the war years.

Meanwhile, TAA continues to focus on political action in its campaign for lower and more reasonable ferry rates – consistent with a modern interpretation of the Terms of Union.

-with files from Tom Beckett

PEI senator seeks bridge toll rollback

Unused federal infrastructure money should be used to reduce tolls on both the Confederation Bridge and the Wood Islands ferry, according to Prince Edward Island Senator Percy Downe. He's urging the Government of Canada to work with Premier Dennis King to address the issue.

The toll is currently \$47.75 for the bridge, with regular increases tied to the cost of living index. Cars using the seasonal ferry pay \$79. Tolls only apply when leaving the island. Senator Downe wants to see the charge for both bridge and ferry crossings reduced to \$20, and has recently put his case in writing to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Originally appointed to the Red Chamber as a Liberal, Senator Downe served as executive assistant to PEI Premier Joe Ghiz and as chief of staff to Prime Minister

Jean Chretien. He's been advocating for removal of bridge tolls for the past four years, pointing out that the new Champlain Bridge in Montreal is toll-free, and subsidized by Canadian taxpayers by an estimated \$168 million per year. Based on that, he maintains, Islanders shouldn't have to pay to use their bridge either, and there's plenty of unused infrastructure money available to help make that happen.



PEI Senator Percy Downe is pitching a plan for a roll-back of tolls on the Confederation Bridge.

“In the weeks leading up to the federal election on October 21st, political parties vying to form the next government will want to make their priorities and positions known to Canadians,” he wrote in an e-mail to Transport Action Atlantic. “As such, Prince Edward Islanders have the right to know where these political parties stand on the issue of outrageously high bridge and ferry tolls, and what they will do to fix it.”

Senator Downe has also written to Conservative leader Andrew Scheer, and indicates he's interested in discussing the tolls issue with other party leaders as well.

-with files from John Cormier

Newfoundland Fixed Link recommended by Commons Transportation Committee

Could the island of Newfoundland be linked with Labrador and the rest of mainland Canada by a 16-kilometre rail tunnel beneath the Strait of Belle Isle?

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities believes the idea is worth pursuing. In a report tabled in Parliament on June 14, the committee recommends *"that the Government of Canada partner with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Quebec, and the private sector work toward building the fixed link, linking the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the province of Quebec to increase the reliability of transportation between the two provinces and alleviating an existing bottleneck that exists with the current ferry service."*

One point the committee would appear to have overlooked is the suitability of the

vessels currently used by Marine Atlantic. Unlike the previous fleet that was retired about eight years ago, the ships now in service were not specifically designed for the Cabot Strait, and certainly not for the challenges of docking in the small and exposed harbour at Port aux Basques in stormy weather.

Bonavista-Burin-Trinity MP Churence Rogers, the only representative from Newfoundland and Labrador on the standing committee, describes the fixed link initiative as a "nation-building" project.

Whether this ambitious idea ever becomes reality is at least a \$1.65-billion-dollar question, according to the preliminary study released by the provincial government in 2018. It certainly will not happen any time soon either, and Transport Action Atlantic is concerned that the idea may be used as a smokescreen to avoid action on escalating ferry rates – a very real issue that needs to be addressed right now.

With the 2019 federal campaign already effectively underway, TAA is making ferry rates a major focus of advocacy in Newfoundland. During the 2015 election, Justin Trudeau termed the cost recovery demands imposed on Marine Atlantic under the Harper government as "unreasonable", but nearly four years later, the Liberals have yet to act.

Marine Atlantic gets new CEO



Murray Hupman, formerly Operations V-P, was named Marine Atlantic's new CEO on April 17.

There's a new leader at the helm of Marine Atlantic. Transport Minister Marc Garneau announced the appointment of Murray Hupman as president and CEO of the federal Crown corporation on April 17. The 20-year company veteran has wide experience in information technology, project management and engineering. He joined the company as head of IT when the function was relocating to Port aux Basques in 1999, and eventually rose to become vice-president of operations, with responsibility for the daily operational aspects of Marine Atlantic's fleet and terminal infrastructure.

Mr. Hupman holds a bachelor of science degree from Dalhousie University, a bachelor of engineering from the

Technical University of Nova Scotia, and a masters certificate in program management. He holds a professional engineering designation with the

Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador. He has also served in various roles with local chambers of commerce and the Canadian Ferry Operators Association.

Don Barnes, who had served as interim CEO following the resignation last year of former president Paul Griffin, has returned to his role as V-P of customer experience.

RFQ issued for new NL ferry

Marine Atlantic is moving forward with an open competitive process for the procurement of a new vessel for its Newfoundland ferry fleet, according to an announcement from the Crown corporation on July 17.



MV *Atlantic Vision* docked at Argentia NL. The charter agreement has been extended to the fall of 2020. (PHOTO – Ted Bartlett)

The first stage of this process is the release of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), intended to identify and shortlist applicants who will be eligible to participate in the second phase, a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The competition will be open to both domestic and international bidders, with a closing date by the end of 2019. Provision for the acquisition was made in the 2019 federal budget.

Marine Atlantic says the new vessel will be a ro-pax design with the ability to carry commercial freight and offer passenger amenities. It's understood that it will

replace the aging MV *Leif Ericson*, currently the oldest ship by far in the organization's four-vessel fleet. The Norwegian-built *Ericson* operates primarily as a commercial vehicle carrier, and will be 34 years old by 2024, when her replacement is expected to be ready for service.

What isn't clear at this point is the plan for eventual replacement of MV *Atlantic Vision*, the only chartered vessel in the fleet. The *Vision*, which boasts a high level of cruise-style amenities, runs on the seasonal North Sydney to Argentina service, while providing the necessary backup for the constitutionally-mandated year-round North Sydney-Port aux Basques run. On lease since 2008, the charter agreement has been renewed several times, and is now set to expire in late 2020, but there is a provision for further extension.

New ferries planned for PEI, Magdalens

The recent federal budget brought some good news for the Prince Edward Island and Magdalen Islands ferry services, when it was announced that the government is committed to building new vessels for both routes. And the file is apparently moving forward on a high-priority basis.

An announcement from Public Services and Procurement Canada on June 19 said the federal government is entering into contract negotiations with shipbuilder Chantier Davie of Lévis, Quebec, for the construction of the two new ferries, which will be owned by Transport Canada.

The PSPC announcement noted that the Government of Canada had determined that Davie was the only Canadian supplier with the capability to build the vessels within the required timeframe. An advance contract award notice was issued in May, giving other potential suppliers an opportunity to submit a statement of capabilities, but none were received.

The new ferries will replace the 1971-built MV *Holiday Island* operated by Northumberland Ferries between Caribou and Wood Islands, and MV *Madeleine*, which is almost 40 years old and currently serves the CTMA run between Souris, PEI, and the Magdalens. In what may be a bit of an understatement, the government announcement acknowledged that both ships are "nearing the end of their life cycle."

-with files from John Cormier

Yarmouth ferry may not sail in 2019

Delays with move to Bar Harbor keep piling up

Last year Bay Ferries, the operator of the CAT ferry service between Maine and Nova Scotia, announced that it was looking to move the American terminus of its service from Portland to Bar Harbor. This move would shorten the duration of the crossing from Yarmouth, reduce fuel costs, and avoid uncertainty about the future of the terminal in Portland; but it would come at a cost to the Nova Scotia government to upgrade the terminal. That funding commitment drew some ire in the lead-up to the 2019 sailing season, and has come even under greater scrutiny as the season has been delayed and is now at risk of being cancelled altogether.

The season was initially planned to begin by around the long weekend in May, but by June Bay Ferries had announced that the season would be delayed, and reservations made up to the start of July would be cancelled. At that point they still hoped to be operating by “mid summer”. The delays were due to ongoing construction of the new terminal, and the fact that US Customs and Border Protection has yet to approve the application for the service to operate from the terminal.



The CAT ferry sits tied up at the dock in Yarmouth in late June. (PHOTO – Tim Hayman)

On July 15, it was announced that all reservations for the remainder of the season would be cancelled, and passengers would be offered full refunds or alternate

passage on the Digby-Saint John ferry, also operated by Bay Ferries. No new reservations will be accepted until a more definitive timeline for the service is known. This further delay calls into question whether the service will operate at all in 2019, an outcome which will be sure to raise further criticism of the ongoing provincial support for the ferry service.

-Tim Hayman

Air

Max 8 crisis suspends overseas flights from YHZ, YYT



A Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft on the tarmac at Halifax Stanfield International Airport in happier times. (PHOTO courtesy of HIAA)

There's been a significant impact on trans-Atlantic flights from the Atlantic region in the aftermath of two related aviation disasters involving Boeing's 737 Max 8 aircraft. Canada imposed a ban I March on all flights by this model, just ahead of a world-wide grounding imposed by regulators that affected all of the nearly 400 planes delivered to date. Two nearly-new Max 8s were involved in fatal crashes less than six months apart, that killed a total of 346 passengers and crew.

Both Air Canada and WestJet had significant numbers of the controversial model in their fleet, and they were planned to be the backbone of year-round and seasonal overseas services from both Halifax and St. John's. Although both airlines were able to compensate somewhat for the capacity loss by extending aircraft leases and in some cases chartering surplus planes from elsewhere, Air Canada chose to cancel all direct service to London Heathrow from both YHZ and YYT until the Max 8 issue was resolved and regulatory approval was granted for a return to service. Overseas passengers were being rerouted to other flights via

Montreal or Toronto. WestJet, which has now centralized all of its trans-Atlantic operations from the region at Stanfield International, cancelled its seasonal flight to Paris, but was able to continue daily round trips to Dublin, Glasgow and London Gatwick by using older-generation 737s.

The planned dates for resumption of Max 8 service have been a moving target. A late-August/early-September timeframe had been expected as the busy summer travel period ramped up, but in June a new setback emerged involving the plane's in-flight control systems – apparently not directly related to the issues implicated in the two fatal crashes. At this writing, industry sources were not expecting the see the controversial aircraft certified to return to service until late this year, with some suggesting that it might stretch well into 2020.

The Max 8 is the latest version of Boeing's narrow-body short to medium range jetliner. In total, the US manufacturer has delivered over 10,000 737s in various models since 1967, making it the largest-selling commercial aircraft in history. The latest variant was designed for longer range and higher fuel efficiency. Larger engines resulted in some structural changes, requiring new technology for certain critical control systems, and there have been allegations that pilots did not receive proper training about the changes.

Retired pilot Chesley Sullenberger, the widely-acclaimed hero of the 2009 “Miracle on the Hudson”, was quoted in a CBC report as insisting that pilots should practice the failure of flight control systems with detailed training on simulators – not planes full of passengers.

“Reading about it on an iPad is not even close to sufficient,” Mr. Sullenberger told the House Aviation Subcommittee in Washington on June 19. Meanwhile, Daniel Carey, head of the pilots' union at American Airlines, said Boeing's zeal to minimize training costs for buyers of the 737 Max contributed to the two deadly crashes and left a “crisis of trust” around aviation safety.

-Ted Bartlett

First phase of air passenger protection rules kicks in ...but collecting compensation may be a challenge

Transport Minister Marc Garneau says Canada has created a world-leading approach to air passenger rights that is clear, consistent, transparent and fair. The comment came on July 15, the effective date for the first phase of a set of new regulations. All airlines flying to, from, or within Canada are now required to play by the new rules, or face penalties of up to \$25,000 for each incident of non-compliance.

The regulations state that carriers must:

- Communicate information to passengers in a simple, clear way about their rights and recourses, and provide regular updates in the event of flight delays or cancellations;
- Provide compensation of up to \$2,400 for denial of boarding for reasons within the airlines' control;
- Ensure passengers receive prescribed standards of treatment during all tarmac delays and allow them to leave the airplane, when it's safe to do so, if a tarmac delay lasts for over three hours and there's no prospect of an imminent take-off;
- Provide compensation for lost or damaged baggage of up to \$2,100 and a refund of any baggage fees; and
- Set clear conditions regarding the transportation of musical instruments as checked or carry-on baggage.

Additional regulations will become effective under phase 2 in December, related to flight delays, cancellations, and seating children in proximity of a parent or guardian.

However, all this might not be quite as positive as the minister is claiming. Halifax-based air passenger rights advocate Gabor Lukacs believes it might not be quite that easy for travellers to actually collect compensation, because the burden of proof is on the passenger. Mr. Lukacs says, for example, that it's virtually impossible to prove that a flight was over-booked, with more passengers at the departure gate than there were seats on the aircraft. He also has issues with the three-hour limit on tarmac delays, maintaining that the industry standard used to be 90 minutes, and that's where it should be capped under the new rules.

-Ted Bartlett

Growth continues at Stanfield International

The arrivals and departures board at Halifax Stanfield International Airport continues to expand – despite setbacks resulting from the grounding of the Boeing Max 8 model. Tiffany Chase, director of public affairs and marketing at the airport authority, says American Airlines has returned to YHZ this summer with a seasonal daily flight to Philadelphia and a once-a-week offering to New York LaGuardia. United Airlines is offering additional year-round service to Newark, plus a seasonal daily flight to Chicago.

She points to the advantage of US pre-clearance now available at YHZ, which means passengers arriving at American destinations are treated as domestic travellers, experiencing no delays for customs and immigration formalities.

Meanwhile, WestJet's ultra-low-cost subsidiary Swoop has strengthened its Halifax presence, offering service now to both Hamilton and London, Ontario.

Rolling into history

This summer marked the 50th anniversary of the end of passenger service on Newfoundland's narrow-gauge railway. The final run of CN train 102 – officially known as the *Caribou*, but more popularly referred to as the “Newfie Bullet” – left Port aux Basques on July 2, 1969. The following morning, passengers disembarked at St. John's for the last time. It was 71 years and four days since the first trans-island express had departed from the city on the newly-completed 547-mile line.

Mixed trains continued to offer limited passenger accommodation on some branch lines and one isolated section of mainline track for another two decades, until the complete abandonment of the railway in September 1988. Most of the right-of-way is now an ATV trail.



(PHOTO courtesy of Bill Linley)

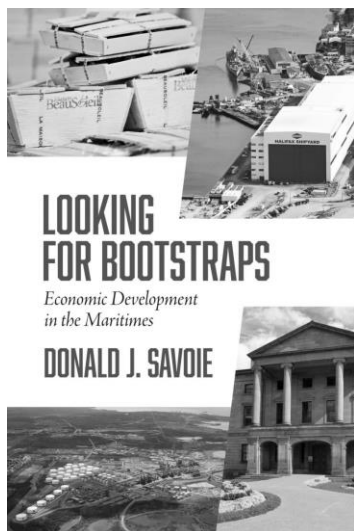
The “Newfie Bullet” moniker is believed to have originated with American military personnel stationed on the island during World War Two. Compared with what they knew at home, steep grades and sharp curves made it a rather slow train, requiring nearly a full day for its entire journey. Interestingly, though, the Bullet was permitted to run at 50 miles per hour on some of the straighter sections of track – that's 20 mph faster than VIA Rail's *Ocean* is allowed today on some 44 miles of the CN Newcastle Subdivision.

The previously unpublished image of train 102 shown here is from the collection of veteran railfan photographer and TAA member Bill Linley. It was taken just west of Deer Lake on October 9, 1968, on his last trip to Newfoundland before the passenger service ended. Vintage Inspection Car #3, built in 1903 for the Reid Newfoundland Company, carried the markers on that day. Bill has recently published a profusely illustrated full-colour book about railroading on the island entitled *Trackside Newfoundland*. For more information, visit www.billlinley.com.

Canada's self-proclaimed "National Newspaper" (yes, the one that isn't available anywhere in Atlantic Canada) even chose to mark the anniversary in its regular page 2 feature "Moment in Time."

-Ted Bartlett

Recommended reading



An interesting read for all those concerned about the future of Atlantic Canada is the latest book written by Donald Savoie entitled *Looking for the Bootstraps*. The author explores and explains the reasons behind the lack of economic development in this region, in the hope that it will rekindle a much needed debate about our future.

The author devoted a chapter to Government and Economic Development, wherein he clearly explains the development of the railways and canals in Canada. It was interesting to note the importance of the railway was underlined by the explicit commitment made in the constitution. In hindsight we know Canada's railway system did not benefit the Maritime provinces

anywhere near the extent that was envisaged at the time of Confederation.

Dr. Savoie brings a fresh perspective to an age-old problem and asks the tough questions. A great read!

-John Cormier

Meet a Member

Christine Mills Garnet



Christine Mills Garnet is a native Haligonian, who also spent part of her childhood in Montreal, before her family moved back home – where she’s lived ever since. She was employed for 28 years at the Royal Bank in secretarial and customer service roles.

Along the way, in 2001, she met her husband and soulmate Marcus Garnet, “because a lovely matchmaker thought we’d hit it off. To make a long story short,” she adds, “Marcus made a large withdrawal from the bank – me!”

Today, husband and wife are both very active in public transportation advocacy. Christine is a board member and membership secretary for Transport Action Atlantic. Marcus is a member of both the TAA and Transport Action Canada boards, and he currently holds the position of secretary with TAC.

Christine rode the bus to work every day when she worked at RBC, and she clearly recalls her dad taking the commuter train to his place of business when living in Montreal as a child. “I still use Halifax Transit often and appreciate its frequent service,” she says. “I also enjoy the ferry ride, which I use year-round, and which I like to call the ‘eight minute cruise’.

“I have travelled extensively in Europe, Greece, Morocco, Portugal, even on the Isle of Gibraltar. We were driving there when for no obvious reason, a light turned red with a vast lot of pavement in front of us. We waited and, thankfully didn’t drive forward – it was a runway and a plane was landing!”

Christine and Marcus live in Dartmouth, where they very much appreciate their beautiful view of Halifax Harbour. She enjoys the company of their clever miniature parrot, Morton, who was sitting on her shoulder as she compiled the notes for this feature. She also enjoys playing music on the piano, cooking, and teaching Sunday school.

“I’m blessed in more ways than I can count,” she says.

TAA mourns president emeritus John Pearce

Transportation advocacy was his lifelong passion



**John Pearce
1934-2019**

A tireless crusader for the cause of convenient, affordable and sustainable public transportation passed away in Dartmouth on June 6, 2019. John Pearce, the founding president of Transport 2000 Atlantic, a long-time board member, and most recently *president emeritus* of Transport Action Atlantic, was 85.

John was born in Toronto, obtained his masters in math and physics at the University of Toronto, and enjoyed a long and successful professional career as a meteorologist, which eventually brought him to Nova Scotia. There he met Karen, his wife of 47 years, at a sports car event.

His involvement in the transportation advocacy movement actually predated the founding of Transport 2000. When the head of the earlier group

relocated to Ottawa in 1977, John rose to the challenge, quickly embracing the Transport 2000 brand which had just arrived in Canada from the UK.

A regional chapter was established here in Atlantic Canada under his leadership. A constitution and by-laws were drafted, and Transport 2000 Atlantic was registered as a charitable society. He became the first president – a position he held for 25 years.

In the beginning John was everything; he was the glue that held the chapter together and the catalyst that made it grow. His home at 40 Lorne Avenue was the office; his phone the communications centre; and his voice and image the

outreach, as he did numerous radio and newspaper interviews on so many outlets. He published *The Bulletin*, attended to all correspondence, grew the membership, organized and promoted all board and general meetings, and never hesitated to lead a peaceful protest waving the Transport 2000 banner.

His primary focus was always passenger rail, and until only very recently he could be frequently found in the Halifax VIA station, promoting the cause and chatting with passers-by and railway employees. His influence and contributions to the cause have been recognized by an annual award that TAA named in his honour. Appropriately, John was the first recipient.

-with files from Donald R. MacLeod

Remembering John Pearce

Some personal reminiscences

I first met John in late 1978 – where else but at the railway station in Halifax – where he was handing out information leaflets. I soon found out that he and I shared the same concerns on passenger rail, with federal Transport Minister Jean-Luc Pepin's 1979 cuts to VIA just on the horizon. In a matter of minutes he had me signed up as a member and shortly after to the board, first as secretary and for the last fourteen years as treasurer.

Over the years I got to know John very well. He was a very dedicated, exceptionally well organized, most sincere person, with set goals. He was always at ease and well prepared when he met with a politician, an official from the transportation industry, or he made a presentation at one of the many town hall meetings he attended around the region. John was a common sense person, and although in the early years his efforts were directed toward passenger rail he understood the necessity, importance, value and uniqueness of all other modes and how they should and must all interconnect and grow together.

At the same time John was a loving husband for almost 50 years to his wife Karen, a devoted father to his two sons Ian and Lorne, an elder and choir member in his church, and a veteran meteorologist with Environment Canada for 35 years, where he was known as the forecaster who always got it right.

-Donald R. MacLeod

I first met John in the dining car on Via Rail somewhere between Montreal and Halifax, in the mid-1980s. I saw two professional looking gentlemen seated at one of the tables, both wearing Transport 2000 badges. One was Nelson Amiro, and the other was John Pearce. I had heard of Transport 2000 before, and after a good meal and fascinating conversation I was a signed-up member! Over the ensuing years I experienced John's dedication to the future of passenger rail, as

well as his concern for inter-city bus service and regional ferries. In the days before the internet and email, John would faithfully compile and mail out packages of news clippings on relevant topics to board members, and I enjoyed reading the many items while I learned a great deal about the logistics and politics of public transportation and rail freight.

I also had the pleasure of getting to know his dear wife Karen, who made us welcome when we visited their home in Dartmouth. Both of them shared an interest in church music, and sang in the choir at St. Matthews. I recall one time when I was sick and living alone, when John called and told me he was bringing round a plate of dinner from a church luncheon. That was an example of how John and Karen showed Christian love in practical ways.

John also helped me move beyond my comfort level, in distributing "save the train" leaflets on board Via Rail at those times when the future of Maritime train service was in jeopardy. As a founding member of Transport 2000, John kept our Atlantic Region organized and effective for many years. His dedication and commitment will be hard to emulate, but together we can take up the torch and keep pressing for convenient, attractive public transportation in Atlantic Canada.

-Marcus Garnet



TAA Treasurer Don MacLeod presents the inaugural John Pearce Award, for outstanding public transportation advocacy, to John Pearce on November 18, 2017.

The first time I met John Pearce was at a Model Railway Show. He was manning a booth for Transport 2000. As Marcus introduced us, Marcus turned around and knocked half of the booth over, plus a bottle of water plunked down right on top of John's toe. John looked at me and said it was his sore toe! John always provided interesting information for the booth, too. People enjoyed talking with him and asking him questions which he could always answer.

Over the years, watching John's loyalty to our organization has been inspiring. I still see him in my mind's eye, handing out Transport Action membership applications every time I'm at the train station.

Once, after John had surgery, he came to our house with a sign (Our Canada includes passenger trains) for our front lawn, wearing his brownish raincoat. John didn't just give it to us – he actually planted the sign in the ground.

We have all lost a dear friend, and will miss the twinkle in his eye, his kindness, and his ability to inspire us.

- Christine Mills Garnet

I first met John through the late Webb Vance who was the regional director of CBRT and GW. I joined Transport 2000 shortly afterwards in 1978. I liked John's quiet unassuming manner, which solidified the respect our organization gained in those formative years and that respect remains today. John Pearce laid an excellent foundation upon which we continue today.

-Dennis Livingstone

Always the visionary, always knowledgeable, always concrete and applied in his proposals for the betterment of passenger services in every public mode; that was John.

-Harry Gow

In Memoriam – John Pearce



A life-long supporter of passenger rail. Several decades apart, we see John with a colourful early era VIA mascot (left), and then manning the TAA booth at the Halifax VIA Rail station in 2015 (above).



John and family in younger days aboard a VIA Rail train.