



TRANSPORT ACTION ATLANTIC
Annual General Meeting- Saturday, 17 October 2020
Zoom Virtual Meeting, Chaired from Moncton, NB

MINUTES

Call to order/welcome

1. Ted Bartlett – 2.00 pm

1. Attendees

2. Tim Hayman, Ashley Morton, Ted Bartlett, Marcus Garnet, Christine Mills-Garnet, Don MacLeod, Michael Perry, Stan Choptiany, Tom Beckett, John Cormier, Allan MacDonald, Cecil Clarke, Milne Hall, Clark Morris, Woodrow French, Howard Easton, Harry Gow, Brenna Jarrar, Terence Johnson, Tom Kelleher, Jim Roche, Justin Tinker.

2. Adoption of agenda

3. Unanimous

3. President's Report Ted Bartlett

- The COVID Virus has made for a terrible year in public transportation in all modes.
- The virus has also made for a negative political climate for transportation and the involvement of government.
- Contacts have been made with various Atlantic Region M.P.'s. Especially notable was a lengthy interview with Fredericton MP Jenica Atwin, who appeared to be particularly knowledgeable and supportive. Before the advent of the virus, she had been using the train regularly to travel to Ottawa.
- VIA Rail management has not been particularly communicative, but we have been assured that the train will eventually return. No consideration was given for passengers, especially those in transit, when the train was hastily cancelled at the beginning of the virus crisis leaving some passengers

stranded. As it stands passenger rail has been cancelled for an indefinite period and it is unclear as to when service might resume.

- The turning loop previously used by VIA Rail has been closed, which will mean a reconfiguration of the train consist with reverse running when the service eventually resumes. As it is, the existing stainless steel rolling stock is seventy years old, and the Renaissance stock is life expired. These will require replacement. At present, there appears to be no sign of this happening. Rail infrastructure improvements and repairs are also required. There is no evidence of political support for any of this in Ottawa.
- Before the virus struck, transit appeared to be “on a roll” with Federal and Provincial governments working together to assist Municipal authorities deliver improved transit. For example, plans are afoot for a \$780 million investment in Halifax transit projects.
- Although Fredericton and Saint John transit were experiencing difficulties with severely reduced passenger loadings as a requirement and result of the virus situation there was some optimism in Charlotte County and the Acadian Peninsula for some regional/rural developments in local transit planning.
- Maritime Bus deserves credit for continuing service albeit reduced to running four days per week. Mike Cassidy reports that social distancing was being maintained by requiring unrelated passengers not to sit side by side and in putting plexiglass between the seat rows. Masks are required to be worn for the duration of the journey.
- Maritime Bus has also been experimenting the use of an electrically powered coach in anticipation of future environmental requirements.
- There is one bus in each direction providing the trans-Newfoundland service.
- The trans-Canada inter-city coach service remains a shambles since Greyhound ceased to operate it. Some local coach firms have initiated services along parts of the former routes serviced by Greyhound but there is still no seamless trans-Canada service.
- Oceanex has been refused an operational subsidy.
- Marine Atlantic rates are based on a 65% recovery which is contrary to the spirit of the Terms of Union.

- Reviving Cape Breton Rail would be cheaper than twinning the highway and would be a green alternative as truck traffic on the highway could be reduced especially if the Nova port proposal comes to pass.
- Air services to the region have been devastated by COVID. WestJet has cancelled most service to the region. Air Canada has also drastically reduced its service. This has led to some speculation that 3 major airports in New Brunswick may no longer be needed.
- The President concluded his remarks on a personal note. He pointed out that he had held the position of President for eight years and that he had passed his 75th birthday. Time was overdue for him to be replaced by a new and younger person. The present Vice-President is prevented from succeeding because of the nature of his employment. There is also a need to expand membership. Every member should consider themselves a recruiter for new members. Ted moved adoption of his report. Second: Marcus Garnet. Vote: unanimous.
- The Vice-President reiterated Ted's remarks about the challenging situation presented by COVID. He pointed out the importance of online connections to continue our liaison with VIA management.

4.Treasurers Report

- Don MacLeod reviewed the report and replied to a request by Ashley Morton for clarification of an item.
- Allan MacDonald (auditor) certified that the bank reconciliation was correct.
- John Cormier moved adoption. Second: Tim Hayman. Vote: unanimous
- Allan Macdonald (auditor) stated that the report fairly represents the financial position of TAA.
- Ashley Morton moved acceptance. Second: John Cormier Vote: Unanimously accepted.
- Allan MacDonald accepted appointment as auditor for 2020-2021.
- Moved: Tim Hayman. Second: Marcus Garnet. Vote: Unanimous

5. Guest Speaker: Mayor Cecil Clarke of Cape Breton Regional Municipality

Mayor Clarke described the current transport needs of the CBRM. He strongly supports the restoration of the Cape Breton Railway which he feels would help facilitate further industrial development in the region together with the proposed Nova port. At present rail, freight and container traffic bound for Cape Breton or Newfoundland is transferred to trucks at Moncton transported via a two-lane highway which is both cumbersome and expensive. A restored railway would relieve the highway of much of the truck traffic. In 2012 there was a proposal to disband public transit in the region because of low ridership. This was resisted and currently over 300,000 passengers are carried annually and this is rising. There is presently a fleet of 36 buses with eight electric buses on order. The Mayor is optimistic about the future economic growth of the region in which a restored railway would play a big part.

The President thanked Mayor Clarke and opened a question and discussion period on the topics and issues raised by the mayor.

6. Guests

At this point the President paused the meeting to welcome Harry Gow, President Emeritus of Transport Action Canada, and Terry Johnson, the current Transport Action Canada President.

7. Membership Report

Christine Mills Garnet reported that there were 70 members in good standing. There were two corporate memberships and four municipal memberships.

10 new members had joined this year.

Membership by province:

53 Nova Scotia, 37 New Brunswick, 5 Newfoundland, 1 Prince Edward Island

Ted commented that we must all become recruitment ambassadors.

Jim Roche of Newfoundland was appointed to the Board of TAA. All other Board members will

remain in place until the next Annual General Meeting. There are presently two vacancies on the Board.

8. Communications

Tim Hayman stressed the importance of our having an “on-line presence”. We must maintain an active presence on Facebook and Twitter. Clark Morris reminded us that current issues posted on Twitter should also be posted on Facebook. Tom Beckett added that these should also be included in email as not all members used Twitter and Facebook.

Don MacLeod announced that the current the Bulletin was in distribution. The deadline for the next Bulletin would be Christmas.

Tim pointed out that there were issues with the TAA website and that it had recently crashed. The membership form was no longer current and it was not possible to renew memberships through the website. Terry Johnson offered to assist with these problems. It is also possible to integrate with the national organization for assistance with regional meetings using a common Zoom account.

9. John Pearce Award

The recipients will be the Regional, Intercity, and City transit operators including drivers and staff who have provided most of the public transport in the Atlantic region during the virus crisis.

10. New Business

Clark Morris suggested that the Halterm shuttle to Fairview be electrified. Tim replied at this point there has been no talk of a rail shuttle. All CN planning for the region

appears to be done in Moncton. A question also arose regarding electrification and the possible interference of double stacked containers with catenary. Howard Easton replied that the Indian Railways had solved this problem, probably by using low floor container wagons.

The use of alternative low carbon energy sources for locomotives was discussed but both battery power and hydrogen presently have serious shortcomings compared to overhead electrification.

Woodrow French noted that opportunities for airline passengers ticket refunds were most unsatisfactory. Airlines were only prepared to grant refunds through the medium of time limited credit vouchers. The reduced deployment of aircraft was making this process difficult. Harry Gow suggested Gabor Lucacs, an air passenger advocate, could be consulted.

There being no further business Woodrow French moved adjournment.