



TRANSPORT ACTION ATLANTIC
Annual General Meeting- Saturday, 15 May 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting, Chaired from Moncton, NB

MINUTES

Call to order/welcome

1. Ted Bartlett – 2.00 pm

1. Attendees

2. Tim Hayman, Ted Bartlett, Marcus Garnet, Christine Mills-Garnet, Don MacLeod, Michael Perry, Tom Beckett, John Cormier, Allan MacDonald, Milne Hall, Clark Morris, Howard Easton, Jim Roche, Justin Tinker, Bob Johnston, Bill Linley, Erica Butler, Matt Keoghan, Sharon Roseman. Regrets: Stan Choptiany, Terry Johnson.

2. **Adoption of agenda:** John Cormier moved, Second Tom Beckett. Adopted

3. **Minutes of last meeting:** Minutes previously circulated. Michael Perry moved approval, Second: John Cormier. Approved. Business arising none.

4. **President's Report** Ted Bartlett

Report previously circulated with the minutes. Ted briefly outlined the highlights of his report.

- The aim must be to meet the public's need. TAA continues to advocate for convenient, affordable, and sustainable public transport. The virus has made for a negative political climate for transportation and the involvement of government, but we must build back better as the virus gradually recedes.
- We are continuing to renew our communications by confining "breaking news" to our on-line media and changing the focus of the Bulletin to in-depth analysis and opinion with a future orientation. We should continue with the printed version of the Bulletin which helps to give ordinary members some substance to their membership. The more input we get from all members the better the organization will become.

- We continue to campaign for the return and renewal of daily service for the Ocean., the proposed one return journey a week is completely inadequate. VIA Rail admits that new equipment is needed for their long-haul services. The present rolling stock is aging, life expired, and inadequate. Trains can no longer be turned at the Halifax terminus ending the use of the once-popular Park Lounge car as it is not designed for reverse working. The minimum standard for the Ocean is a return to at least the service speed of twenty years ago combined with a daily schedule.
- Plaudits should be extended to Mike Cassidy of Maritime Bus for managing to maintain a reduced service through the pandemic despite having only 80 to 100 passengers a day. A helping hand must be extended to Maritime Bus or services to northern New Brunswick will be eventually lost. Public transit is also suffering with reduced ridership and driver availability resulting in reduced frequencies and complete curtailment of some routes.
- The Marine Atlantic proposed rate increase has been postponed thanks to the efforts of Jack Harris. We continue to emphasize that Marine Atlantic rates should reflect the original Terms of Union rather than being based on a partial cost recovery.
- There continues to be problems with fare refunds by the airlines. We should all be making a more thoughtful environmental approach to air travel by asking ourselves whether a planned flight is necessary.
- Ted expressed the desire to retire after nine years as president of TAA. A successor is not yet apparent. We need to recruit more members. Vice-president Tim was optimistic about the return of VIA services as the border re-opens between Quebec and the Maritimes but pointed out that some VIA equipment is 70 years old, and structural issues mean that it cannot be modified to make it more accessible to persons with mobility issues. Although new equipment has been ordered from Siemens for the corridor services there so far appears to be no movement to order new equipment for long haul services. If this situation continues the eventual result could be the complete curtailment of these services.

The subsidy to keep the railway line to Cape Breton in place has been extended by the Nova Scotia government but it is insufficient to make any improvements.

- The on-line pages have been kept current with a lively Facebook exchange. Tim called for further member contributions to these pages

5. Treasurer's Report

- Don MacLeod reviewed the report previously circulated and commented favourably on the balance. Don moved acceptance of the report. Second John Cormier. Accepted.
- Allan MacDonald (auditor) certified that the financial statement fairly represented our financial position.
- Tom Beckett 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: Marcus Garnet. Unanimously accepted.
- Allan MacDonald accepted appointment as auditor for 2021-2022.
- Appointed of Allan as auditor: Moved: Tim Hayman. Second: Marcus Garnet. Vote: Unanimous

6. Justin Tinker of Campobello Island

Justin has been campaigning for a year-round connection for Campobello with the Canadian mainland. In the past, the ferry connection to Deer Island was seasonal, sailing only during the summer months. At other times of the year island inhabitants had to cross the bridge to Maine and drive to St. Stephen. This involved crossing international boundaries twice with the associated inconveniences and impediments. The pandemic has caused all kinds of extra border crossing restrictions and has made the need for a year-round ferry to Canada even more imperative. This year the New Brunswick government has extended a subsidy to the private ferry operators to allow them to temporarily extend the regular season.

This cannot apply for the full year as the ferry, which consists of a roll-on roll-off barge towed

by a tug, is unsuitable in winter conditions. There is no pontoon landing stage provided at each end of the route which requires vehicles to drive over a beach to reach the barge ramp. Justin has been leading a campaign to involve both the federal and the provincial government to aid in operating a vessel suitable for year-round service to the Canadian mainland thus avoiding the border restrictions. This would be a costly but necessary solution, but it was agreed that Campobello, as part of Canada and the province of New Brunswick, requires this Canadian connection. Campobello has been suffering economic hardship because of the existing situation and there has been a steady loss of population. Justin Tinker was supported in his efforts by those present. The President wished Justin well.

7. Membership Report

Christine Mills Garnet reported that because of a computer changeover certain membership files were lost., but she has calculated an estimate of seventy-six members using other sources. She hopes to have a more precise figure for the next meeting.

8. John Pierce Award

It was decided to postpone making this award to a later date.

Guest: Phillippe Cannon of VIA Rail

M. Cannon thanked TAA for the invitation to speak. He announced that there would be a Phased reintroduction of the Ocean service as health protocols permitted. The train consists would be a combination of the stainless- steel cars with the renaissance cars. There are new slow orders due to the condition of the track on the north shore of New Brunswick. VIA Rail is mindful of the need to improve the permanent way on this section of the route.

The Chair thanked Phillippe and pointed out that the rolling stock was now largely life expired and that the stainless- steel stock cannot be modified to allow for greater accessibility. He suggested that the View liner cars built by CAF and currently in use on AMTRAK for its longer

distance services might be suitable replacements. These cars provide sleepers/roomettes and can be fitted with a wheelchair lift.

General Discussion

Tom Beckett suggested that Newfoundlanders might find nearby St. Pierre and Miquelon airport as an alternative international air connection to Paris. The present nearest Air Canada international connections are provided only through Montreal or Toronto.

Herb Emery commented on the transportation system in the Maritimes and how much of it is orientated to the extractive industries. Raw materials are transported out while value added manufactured products are transported in. This is partly the cause of young people moving out of the region to central and western Canada to seek employment. The Atlantic Region needs to become more self-sufficient. There also appear to be policies favouring population centres like Moncton to the detriment of the rural areas. The north-eastern region of New Brunswick appears to have been neglected as a result. We should engage in more "Blue Sky" thinking in seeking solutions.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3.30 pm.