Ontario Report
Transport Action Ontario
(Formerly Transport 2000 Ontario)

Trax light rail transit in downtown Salt Lake City, UT, opened in 1999 and keeps growing. Waterloo Regional Council took a major step forward on June 15 by adopting a two-phase LRT construction program for the Waterloo-Kitchener-Cambridge region. (Cool Hand Luke 2004 photo from Wikimedia.)

Waterloo Regional Council Adopts LRT Rapid Transit & Funding Plan

June 15 marked a major step forward for Waterloo Region as Regional Council voted to adopt and fund Grand River Transit's rapid transit plan for Waterloo-Kitchener-Cambridge. The plan includes building a light rail transit (LRT) line on reserved or private right-of-way. The LRT route is in the King Street corridor, at several places utilizing an old railway line. LRT is to be complemented by a redesigned network of local and express bus routes.

LRT is to be built in two phases. In the first phase LRT will be built from Conestoga Mall at the north end of Waterloo, skirt the east side of the University of Waterloo,

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From The President - Peter Miasek

Toronto's chickens coming home to roost: Readers will recall that Transport Action Ontario is very concerned about rapid transit development in Toronto. As discussed in my "From the President" column of Nov.-Dec., 2010, entitled "Interesting Times for Toronto Rapid Transit," newly-elected Mayor Ford overturned years of transit planning by the City and Metrolinx by immediately proclaiming "The war on the car is over" and "Transit City (ie on-street LRT) is dead – the people want subways." At the time, it was not clear which view would emerge.

In March, a non-binding agreement was released by Metrolinx and the Mayor's Office that outlined a compromise plan. Metrolinx would be responsible for financing and implementing the Eglinton-Scarboro Crosstown LRT project, which would be entirely underground from Jane St. to Kennedy Station, and then use the existing SRT guideway to Scarboro Town Centre. The cost of this project is $8 Billion plus and would consume all of the provincially committed funds for Toronto rapid transit. The City would be responsible for financing and implementing Sheppard East and West Subway projects, which are subway extensions to Scarboro Town Centre and Downsview, respectively. The cost of these extensions has been cited at about $5 billion. "Enhanced bus service" on Finch Ave. West was also identified as a Toronto responsibility. Extension of rapid transit to points east of Scarboro Town Centre would not occur.

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There was a lot of negative reaction to the plan. Suburban councillors in the west and east lamented the absence of rapid transit in their areas. Observers noted that large amounts of provincial funding was being wasted by needlessly burying the Eglinton line in suburban areas. And there was general incredulity that the City could somehow finance the Sheppard extensions from project-related Development Charges (DCs), Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and development of city-owned surplus land, as initially claimed by the Mayor.

Also in March, the City revived Toronto Transit Infrastructure Limited under the chairmanship of Ford ally Dr. Gordon Chong to identify funding sources for Sheppard. In May, Chong got into hot water by expressing doubt that DCs and TIF would be sufficient, and that road tolls were a useful revenue tool. He was immediately slapped down by politicians of all stripes. Also in May, Chong advised that private sector investment could only be expected to fund at most 40% of the project. And this would be with massive up-zoning of Sheppard, to allow developments such as 10 towers of 20-40 stories and numerous smaller buildings at each new station. One can only imagine neighbourhood reaction to these developments!

Toronto's chickens are coming home to roost – subways are very expensive and not necessary in suburban areas with wide streets like Sheppard, Finch and the outer parts of Eglinton. Because of the subway fixation, very little rapid transit of any kind will be built in a city that desperately needs it.

Meanwhile other municipalities are making progress in more sensible directions. York Region is constructing on-street BRT lines in dedicated lanes. Waterloo Regional Council just approved on-surface LRT for Kitchener-Waterloo, including tax increases to pay their $300 million municipal share of the costs. Hamilton is proceeding with design of on-street LRT, with strong citizen and political support.

In Toronto, there is growing sentiment to delay Ford's Sheppard subway until his term is ended and then go back to LRT. And to start construction only on the central portion of Eglinton, so that the extremities can revert to surface LRT under a future mayor.

There is also growing interest in a Regional Rapid Rail concept, first described in my earlier column. This involved converting GO trains to fast, frequent electrified service with stops roughly every two kilometers and good connections to local transit. This has the potential to reach many of the same catchment areas as the previously planned LRT lines, and do not materially interfere with auto traffic. This concept was written up in a Toronto Star op-ed piece by Greg Gormick as a spinoff of his report "No Little Plan: Electrifying GO Transit" commissioned by Transport Action Ontario and the Clean Train Coalition. Greg's article was very well received and is stimulating discussion.

Either the original LRT plan or the regional rapid rail concept make much more sense than subways in suburban areas. With either of these alternatives, Toronto also gets a rapid transit *network* that would build transit ridership without overwhelming the TTC's Yonge and Bloor subway lines.

Toronto is facing dark days. There is a massive 2012 budget shortfall. The Ford campaign promises of cutting taxes, reducing waste, retaining service and building subways was obviously the highest order of fiction. The chickens are now starting to come home to roost, and it won't be pleasant. ▪

Waterloo Region LRT

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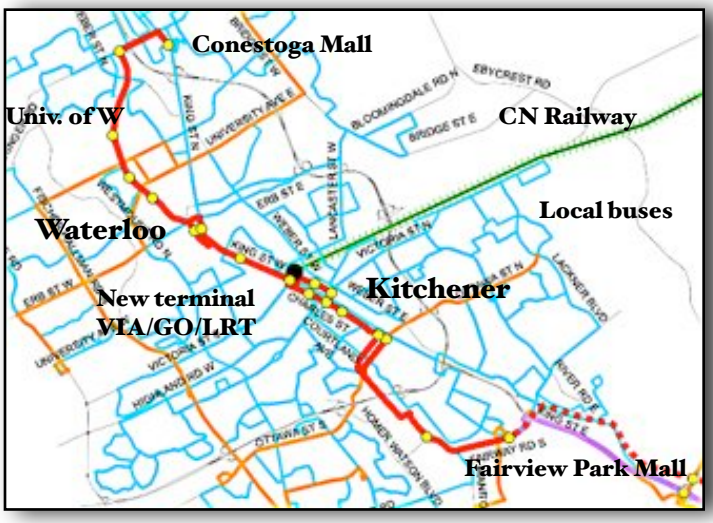
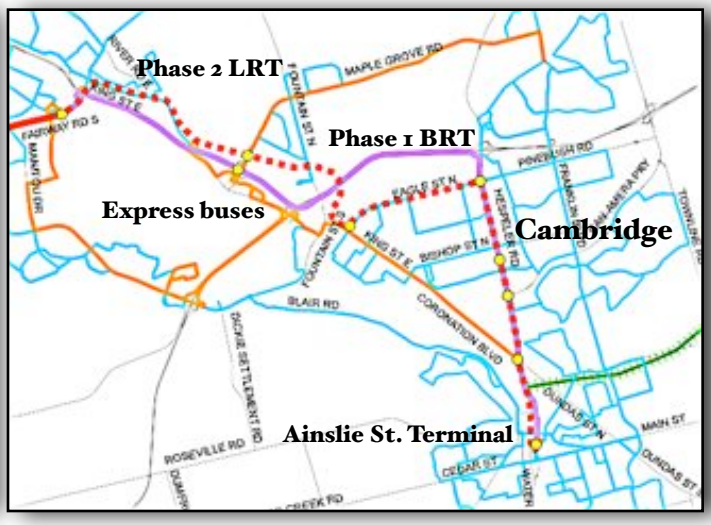
pass through Waterloo's downtown, and cross under the CN railway line with a new intermodal transportation hub to be built here to accommodate VIA and GO Transit trains, the LRT and other transit buses, as well as intercity bus services. From this point the LRT would continue through downtown Kitchener on King and Charles Streets (a one-way road pair), extending to Fairview Park Mall in the south end of Kitchener. From this LRT station, express bus service would continue into Cambridge. In Phase 2, LRT would be extended into Cambridge along Hespeler Road, a major shopping street, to the existing Ainslie transit terminal in central Cambridge. (See maps on Page 3.)

On Sunday, June 12, 2011, Tri-Tag, the local citizens group supporting light rail, organized its second Rally For Rails at Speaker's Corner in downtown Kitchener (northwest corner of the intersection of King and Benton). Over 250 people attended the Rally to remind Regional Council of the public's support for LRT, the key element in the Grand River Transit's rapid transit plan, ten years in the making. Tri-Tag has worked to gather support of residents and organizations including attending budget committee meetings to show that the LRT plan was affordable.

Public support for the LRT plan has been consistent over the years, including Regional Council's backing of the plan at its June 24, 2009 Council meeting. At that point the Province committed $300 million to the project, with the federal government agreeing to provide $265 million. But in the October 2010 municipal election, LRT opponents





loudly argued that the Region's share of the project's cost, $265 million, would result in a large increase in property taxes. Holding the line on taxes became a major issue for candidates running as regional councillors. Following the election, rapid transit project staff went to work to fine tune the project design with the aim of cutting its costs, but also to work on a route design that would find local public acceptance.

Prior to Regional Council's June 15, 2011 meeting, LRT had garnered support from some major employers in the region, the Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce (with conditions), the University of Waterloo and its student federation, and non-profit groups such as the Waterloo Federation of Agriculture, the regional construction trades council, the Grand River Environmental Network, K-W realtors, and Kitchener cyclists and its pedestrian group. The K-W *Record* endorsed light rail (June 11), and earlier (June 1) rejected a referendum noting that it was the job of councillors to lead the community, especially in situations where the community appeared fragmented (in one poll, one-third of those contacted wanted better roads instead of a transit investment).

On May 30, 2011, in a front-page K-W *Record* article, columnist Jeff Outhit claimed that 12 regional councillors had said in the October election that they could not support the proposal at its estimated costs, with LRT critics suggesting that a vote for LRT would be breaking an election pledge. The group Taxpayers for Sensible Transit opposed LRT as too costly and now with costs even higher. Pro-rail Tri-Tag spokesperson Tim Mollison was quoted as saying that councillors had said they would lower the costs and this has been done, meeting their pledges, with $149 million being cut from construction plans. Still, $177 was added to the project's price as the cost of inflation to 2014, the date at which construction would begin.

At the June 15th Regional Council meeting, the phased LRT plan was adopted by a vote of 9 in favour, 2 opposed, with 4 councillors excused due to conflict of interest. The funding plan was adopted by a vote of 10-1, with 4 abstentions. The funding plan included an annual property tax increase of 0.7% over 7 years for LRT capital costs, and operating and maintenance costs, and an annual property tax increase of 0.3% over 7 years starting in 2012 for bus network improvements and related operational and maintenance costs. Because the City of Cambridge had been disadvantaged in the staging of the LRT project, and this had brought strong objections from local representatives and the business community in Cambridge, $1 million dollars was set aside annually for 10 years to expedite transit improvements for Cambridge, including quickly getting underway the planning of the LRT Phase 2 extension to Ainslie terminal.

During the deliberations of Council, Carl Zehr, long-time Mayor of Kitchener, indicated that the adoption of LRT was an historic event, and highlighted three reasons to proceed with the plan. First was the long term vision to concentrate urban development along the rapid transit corridor and thus to protect the countryside from urban expansion. Also there was a cost to doing nothing, in particular the loss of $600 million that senior levels of governments were prepared to spend on the project. Finally, the project has multiple benefits: environmental benefits, economic stimulus, urban growth management, reduction in traffic congestion, and overall improvement in the quality of life for the region. The transit plan is regional, he said, and major projects of this sort are typically built in phases, assuring Cambridge that it is not left out. Supporting the LRT plan provides the opportunity for Council to make a "truly transformational decision," he concluded.

The rapid transit project for Waterloo Region will undergo Ontario's watered down environmental assessment for transit projects, a six month process. The process presents the details of the plan and obtains feedback at public information meetings, this feedback, however, being almost advisory. ▪

Megabus - Luxury Low Cost Travel from Coach Canada/ Coach U.S.A.

The Canadian airline industry is complaining about airport costs in Canada that are a factor in ticket prices on flights to the U.S. With the high value of the Canadian dollar, some travellers have discovered that flights into the U.S. are cheaper from near border airports such as Buffalo. Indeed this writer's spouse recently decided to use a low-cost U.S. airline at Buffalo Airport to attend a converence in Massachusetts. But how to get to Buffalo Airport from Toronto? Enter Coach Canada and Megabus.

Coach U.S.A. was created from a group of bus lines in 1995, went through expansion and was bought by Stagecoach Group (Gt.Britain) in 1999 for $1.88B USD. In the same year Stagecoach entered Canada as Coach Canada by purchasing Trentway-Wagar of Peterborough, Autocar Connaisseur of Montreal, and Erie Bus Lines of London, Ontario.

In 2006 the Megabus brand was introduced in the U.S. in the form of the hub-and-spokes model, with fares based on yield management. Megabus advertises bargain seats starting as low as $1.00 if bought early enough (plus 50 cents reservation fee). Megabus is following the model of low-cost airlines. Megabuses operate between city pairs with minimal or no stops at cities in between. By 2009 in the U.S. there were enough interlinked Megabus hubs that the system could be called a network, at least in the U.S. northeast. In 2008 a Toronto Megabus hub was opened by Coach Canada with service under this brand into the U.S. through Buffalo, and between Toronto and Montreal.

A major step forward in passenger comfort occurred in 2008 when Megabus added double-decker low-floor TD925 Astromega model buses from Van Hool, the Belgian bus manufacturer. (Note that in the Toronto area, a Van Hool transit bus fleet is operated by VIVA in York Region.) In 2009, Coach Canada acquired 15 Van Hool TD925

Canada Coach's Megabus service leaving Toronto's Dundas Street terminal, 6:30am for Kingston and Montreal, with Montreal arrival at 12:15 noon, on June 8, 2011.

buses. These buses seat 59 passengers on the upper deck, and 12 passengers, and two wheelchair positions, plus the driver on the lower level. These buses carry electrical plugs for computers, and also have wi-fi. Seats are quite roomy and recline well. On any given trip, a double-decker bus may not be used. Instead Coach Canada drawing on its large fleet of single-level MCI buses.

The trip from Toronto to Buffalo Airport is scheduled at three hours including the stop of about half-an-hour at customs and immigration, where one must take his or her baggage with them to be processed by the border control, with, hopefully no delays for people whose papers are not in order. The 7AM trip from the Toronto Bus Terminal arrives at 10AM at the Buffalo Airport, in time to make flights departing at 11AM or later. Megabus also operates between Toronto and Montreal with one stop in Kingston. A two-week advanced purchase for Toronto-Buffalo Airport was recently obtained for the price of $19 plus taxes.

We found the Coach Canada website to be a bit complex. When using the left side of the website, where one enters origin and destination cities, this portion of the website will not show Buffalo or other New York state cities as destinations. To get Buffalo Airport service and other service into New York state, you need to click on the second paragraph

Toronto-Buffalo Airport-New York in the central section of the website. It will show five Coach Canada services beginning at 8AM. But there are two additional Megabus services from Toronto, one at 7AM and the other at 3PM. However, you will only get these two services if you click on the Megabus panel at the top of the Coach Canada website (in the centre).

At the time we were purchasing tickets, only one-way tickets could be purchased. So, to go to Buffalo Airport, you can buy your ticket in advance through the Coach Canada website, but for the return ticket leaving Buffalo Airport for Toronto, you need to use the Megabus.com website and pay in U.S. funds. It's an extra step. If you have a problem, you can speak to Customer Service at Coach Canada. They are very helpful, and will advise on how much time you need between leaving Toronto and catching your flight in Buffalo so that you can select the right bus to connect with your flight.

Editorial comment: The Megabus model is a welcome new dimension to inter-city public transportation, and this editor hopes for its continuing success. However, there are clear signs that the regulated bus industry that guaranteed inter-city coach service to towns and smaller cities on Ontario's highways is in trouble. With the shift of package freight to

courier companies, and continuing decline in ridership due to private auto use, intercity bus companies have cut or entirely abandoned services on local routes. While the megabus type of service may be successful between major centers, large portions of Ontario basically have no form of public transport. In the U.S. and Quebec, forms of rural transit and regional transit have appeared which address this mobility deficit. With the cost of travel increasing substantially as a result of rising energy costs, it's time for Ontario to develop an effective rural and regional transit policy. ▪

Why Is Rail Travel Between Canada's Largest Cities Slower Than It Used To Be?

by Avrum Regenstreif

Recently, I had an opportunity to travel to Montreal from Toronto (333 rail miles) for a meeting, returning the next day. Choosing VIA, I took the only early morning Train 052 at 6:40 a.m., a local, arriving in Montreal at 12:28 noon. This train was supposed to arrive at 12:17 p.m., but came in more than 10 minutes late. This 60 mph (100kph) average speed) train stopped at Guildwood, Oshawa, Cobourg, Belleville, Kingston, Brockville, Cornwall, and Dorval. This is a trip which, in the 1970's used to take 4hrs-59 minutes (67mph) with approximately the same number of stops. (That was also a time when CN had been a valuable Canadian government asset for the previous 60 years; CN was sold to the private sector in 1995 for a song by the Mulroney Conservative government.) The best timings were CN's, and then VIA's Turbo Trains (1973-1982) which made the express trips between Toronto and Montreal in 3hrs-59min., an average speed of 84mph.)

This current trip time, slower than VIA's Rapido of more than 30 years ago, now has the advantage of powerful 4,000 hp "Genesis" diesel-electric (DE) locomotives pulling 5-6 VIA Renaissance 7000-series coaches. Genesis locomotives, with a design speed of 115 mph., are easily able to handle this new equipment at operating speeds of 105-110mph on appropriate, safe, infrastructure.

Under current schedules, the following are possible reasons for schedule delays and late arrivals: (a) waiting for a late passenger at Oshawa or some other station; (b) construction activity along the line near Trenton, Belleville, Brockville, Cornwall, and Summerstown; (c) waiting for another VIA train to clear near Kingston; (d) construction activity in the vicinity of Turcot Yards, along the way to Central Station in downtown Montreal.

On the morning trip between Cornwall and Montreal, I stood at the rear door of the last car observing landscape, road conditions, railway crossings and new low speed switches, and rural crossing construction. Also noted were high voltage electric transmission lines from the Saunders Dam west of Cornwall paralleling the CN rail line all the way from Cornwall to central Montreal. In the 45 mile stretch between Cornwall and Vaudreuil, I watched as we swept along at speeds of 80-90mph on a alignment which runs absolutely straight with one small jog.

From Vaudreuil to Ste Anne de Bellevue the train slowed down considerably to 60-65mph preparing to cross several rail bridges and a curving track alignment across Ile Perrot. This was obviously a section never designed for higher speed train operations. Once onto the west Island of Montreal, the train accelerated once again to over 75mph until it slowed on its approach to Dorval Station, the only stop west of downtown Montreal. Leaving Dorval, the train sped up again but only to less than 60-65mph into Turcot Yards in the Montreal west area, after which it slowed steadily to speeds of 40mph or less into VIA's Central Station.

On the return journey the next afternoon, VIA train 067, the only daily express, left Montreal's Central Station at 5:00 p.m. sharp. Slowly, it rolled out through Point St. Charles and lower St. Henri, and swung back out through Turcot Yards heading for Dorval. The west Island of Montreal passed at speeds slightly faster than Train 052 the day before. However, once out of Dorval station, the train sped up to 80mph or more until it slowed as it approached and crossed the Ste Anne de Bellevue bridge along the curving track across Ile Perrot and over the second bridge into Vaudreuil. Then, the train really opened up and moved into its 80-95mph speed range, slowing only slightly as it passed through Coteau Jct. The train flew through Cornwall and onto the fastest stretch of track extending west from Cornwall to Cardinal and Prescott. It was on this same stretch of railway, in 1971, that one of CN's Turbo Trains registered the fastest ever railway speed in Canada, more than 140mph (224kph). (For the test demo, at that time, all level crossings were either closed or guarded by police, underscoring the importance of fencing and grade separating all rail crossings if higher speed rail operations are to become a reality.)

Aside from the problem of railway crossing onto the island of Montreal, from the west at least four other speed-related problem areas were observed. These are areas which must be redesigned and rebuilt if continuous higher speed rail operations between Montreal and Toronto are to be achieved within the existing CN corridor. These include:

(1) Track alignments through the Kingston area have curves which are too tight to permit higher speed trains (i.e. speeds greater than 200 kph). Therefore, a bypass alignment north of Kingston for trains, some of which may not be stopping locally, will be required.

(2) New rail alignment, track curvature, and new rail viaduct through the Napanee area must be redesigned and built to HSR standards.

(3) CP rail bridge over the CN ROW at Shannonville must be redesigned and rebuilt to permit higher speed operations on the CN mainline which runs beneath it.

(4) Rail alignment and new viaduct across the Trent waterway at Trenton required to be built to HSR standards,

Each of these conditions results in many miles of speed reductions, and subsequent accelerations for trains passing through these speed restricted areas.

Systematically addressing these constraints as well as the bridges at the west end of Montreal Island, as well as secure fencing and elimination of level crossings along the higher speed route, is essential in moving, even incrementally, to faster train operations (i.e. average speeds of 95-110 mph or more with electrification), instead of 70-75mph as at present. This can be achieved before even beginning electrification of railway mainlines, or both can

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Why Is Rail Travel So Slow?

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proceed in tandem. This kind of process could make it possible to incrementally move to higher speed operations, gradually reducing travel time within the network, from the present 4.5 hours to 3.25 hours or less.

Once electrification is introduced within the network and roadbeds with reinforced concrete sleepers, spring steel tie anchors, and high speed switches, are in place, average speeds can increase steadily from 75-110mph, to110-155mph (the medium high speed range), reducing the travel time limit to 2.5 hours, even before full HSR (greater than 187mph) is introduced within the network moving down to 2 hours or less. Most important, once three.hour (express) travel time between the two cities is achieved and maintained, then the case for electrification of the entire line will be easier to make, leading also, through induced demand, to many more high-speed trips and/or long commutes per day on the same line. ▪

U.S. Sec. LaHood Reallocates $2.4 Billion in High Speed Rail Grants Rejected by Florida

In February, 2011, newly elected Republican Governor of Florida, Rick Scott, rejected $2.4B that had been awarded the State of Florida for their Tampa-Orlando high speed train proposal, the first leg of a system that was to be extended to Miami. On March 11, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced a competition for this money that Florida had given up. Some 90 applications from 24 states were received in response to LaHood's call.

On May 9, the Federal Railroad Administration announced $2.02B in new grants to 15 states for 22 high speed intercity rail projects. These projects included:

➢ $795M to upgrade AMTRAK's electrified Northeast Corridor (track and catenary);

➢ $404.1M to expand fast trains in the U.S. midwest with grants to achieve 110mph track between Chicago and St.Louis, and between Chicago and Detroit;

➢ $336.2M for a pool of state-of-the-art locomotives and cars for California and the midwest high speed and fast train projects;

➢ and $300M for an extension of 20 miles to the 110 miles of high speed track already funded for the Central Valley segment of the California high-speed rail route between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

With respect to the midwest funds, $196.5 was allocated for track and signal improvements between Kalamazoo and Dearborn, MI, to allow a 30 minute reduction in travel time for trains between Chicago and Detroit.

The FRA reports that, with the American Recovery and Re-investment Act of 2009, the Obama administration has obtained appropriations of $10.1B for higher speed rail, of which, currently, $5.8B has been obligated for rail projects that are underway. The aim of this funding is to connect 80% of the U.S. population to high speed rail in 25 years.

The huge response by most states to Obama's high speed rail funding opportunities demonstrates widespread support to bring the U.S. passenger rail system into the 21st century. The rejection of U.S.federal funds for rail in Wisconsin, Ohio and Florida is supposedly because the new rail services that would be built would require increased long-term state operating and maintenance costs for the new rail services. (If it were highway money, no such operating cost excuses would be made.) Noting that these three states are swing states in the 2012 U.S. presidential election, a plausible explanation of the rejection is the desire on the part of the far-right governors of these three states to not allow Obama any credit for program spending that would have likely had significant positive economic spinoffs in those areas of the country.

Given the advancing higher speed rail programs in New York state (Democratic), and in Michigan (Republican), one may wonder if Canada and Ontario will be ready with higher speed trains when U.S. high speed rail comes knocking at our gateways? ▪

Threat of track abandonment on the Whirlpool Rapids Bridge at Niagara Falls

In the Nov.-Dec. 2010 *Ontario Report*, we reported on New York's investment in higher speed rail in the Empire Corridor from New York City to Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo and Niagara Falls. The City of Niagara Falls, NY, is building a modern intermodal transportation terminal on its side of the Whirlpool Bridge, with ample facilities for border crossing trains. The bridge is the crossing point for the joint VIA Rail/AMTRAK *Maple Leaf* daily train between Toronto and New York City. But will there be an track left on the bridge for the *Maple Leaf* and the fast trains of the future to use?

Whirlpool Rapids Bridge is the site of the first railway connection between Canada and U.S. across the Niagara River, a rail and road suspension bridge opened in 1855. The present cantilever bridge opened in 1897 to a high standard of strength and durability. Whirlpool Bridge ownership passed to the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission in 1959. Several years ago CN diverted freight trains to its own Ft.Erie railway bridge, leaving only the *Maple Leaf* passenger train to use the Whirlpool crossing. The Niagara Falls, ON, VIA station hosts several Toronto-Niagara Falls trains besides the *Maple Leaf*, and eventually will be the destination of GO rail service from Toronto.

CN Rail has decided that the rail crossing at Niagara Falls is not needed, and it has put the track on the bridge on its Three-Year Plan of rail discontinuance. The bridge track, described as between MP 0.35 and 0.47, appeared on the Plan in June 2008, and so is close to the start of actual abandonment. The process triggers various steps that allow acquisition by other railways and by governments. This editor would suggest that VIA should take up the track ownership in order to secure the continuance of international passenger rail service with the U.S. The new border crossing facility

being constructed on the U.S. side has the potential of speeding up border control processing of passengers. That would make attractive the extension of more Empire Corridor AMTRAK trains to Toronto than the single and rather slow schedule of the current *Maple Leaf*.

The Niagara Falls Bridge Commission is a joint agency of the State of New York and the Province of Ontario. With the collapse of the Falls View Bridge in 1938, the Commission was created to build the replacement Rainbow Bridge. The Lewiston-Queenston Bridge, opened in 1962, also belongs to the Commission. The Whirlpool Bridge was acquired by the Commission in 1959 and is currently undergoing refurbishment. Road traffic on the bridge is reserved entirely to members of the NEXUS pass program. Next to the Whirlpool Bridge is the closed Michigan Central cantilever bridge, now owned by the City of Niagara Falls, ON, and scheduled to be dismantled in 2012. The Peace Bridge at Ft. Erie, ON, is a joint compact bridge between the State of New York and the Government of Canada. ▪

Niagara Falls Mayor Diodati Responds to $1 Billion Barrier to GO Transit Niagara Rail Service

The long awaited environmental assessment (EA) study on GO Transit rail service to Niagara Falls was released on May 19, 2011. The study saw the Welland Canal crossing as a major obstacle to extending GO rail service as far as the VIA station in Niagara Falls, noting that close to $1B would be needed to tunnel under or bridge over the canal. Presently, CN Rail uses a lift bridge that must open for large ships, with shipping given priority over rail bridge use. Mayor Jim Diodati questioned the need for an expensive tunnel or new high level bridge. He stated that the proposed rail service is only six trains a day and that the shipping season is eight months long. He is facilitating talks with the Seaway authority in an effort to coordinate passenger train and ship movements at the present bridge to avoid new costly civil engineering that would delay new rail service.

The EA also considered staged extension of GO rail service to the peninsula, first to Grimsby or St.Catharines. The mayors of these two communities would be happy with early GO trains to their cities, but Niagara Fall's mayor believes that the three peninsula cities should all receive GO rail service at the same time so as to maximize ridership and insure economic benefits across the whole of the region.

Editorial comment: In all these discussions, VIA Rail is left out of consideration. In order to achieve all-day two-way rail service for the peninsula, a fare and service compact ought to be worked out between GO and VIA so that VIA has an incentive to increase their train service as well to Niagara Falls in order to meet the region's very large inter-city traffic demand, most of which is outside the narrow weekday commuting hours. ▪

(Information from *Niagara This Week*, May 24, 2011.)

Ed Levy on the History of Toronto Rapid Transit Planning, Part 1: Early Days, 1909-1912

Transport Action Ontario's AGM in March 2011 featured panel presentations and discussion regarding Toronto's transit future. As part of the panel, transportation planner Ed Levy discussed some of the findings of his new study, soon to be published by Neptis Foundation. Levy's study examines Toronto region rapid transit planning going back to 1909 for insights as to why governments have failed us with regard to providing a rapid transit network for the Toronto urban region.

One of Ed Levy's major themes that shapes his historical overview is the requirement to have a network of transit services if transit is to provide everyone with adequate mobility throughout an urban area. A network can consist of a mix of different transit technologies - bus and streetcar, subway, commuter rail - as long as there are many easy to make transfer points and a high level of service that can accommodate almost any kind of origin-destination trip that people need and want to make.

Modern transit planning advanced beyond the historic street railway with the challenge that arose over the design and development of rapid transit. In 1909, a British syndicate approached Toronto's City Engineer with a plan for two streetcar subways, one under Yonge Street from Union Station to the greenfields of Eglinton Avenue, and another east-west line underneath Queen, Dufferin and Dundas Streets. The model being followed was the very successful streetcar subway system that opened in Boston in 1897 and is still operating today after numerous extensions. A referendum vote on "Tubes for the People" received majority support, but the newly elected mayor at the time, George Geary, opposed the plan as too expensive and was able to turn City Council against it.

A few months later, a committee of council was struck to pursue the subway idea and New York City-based consultants Jacobs and Davies were retained. Their report of August, 1910, explored multiple streetcar subway alternatives, a key feature being a subway

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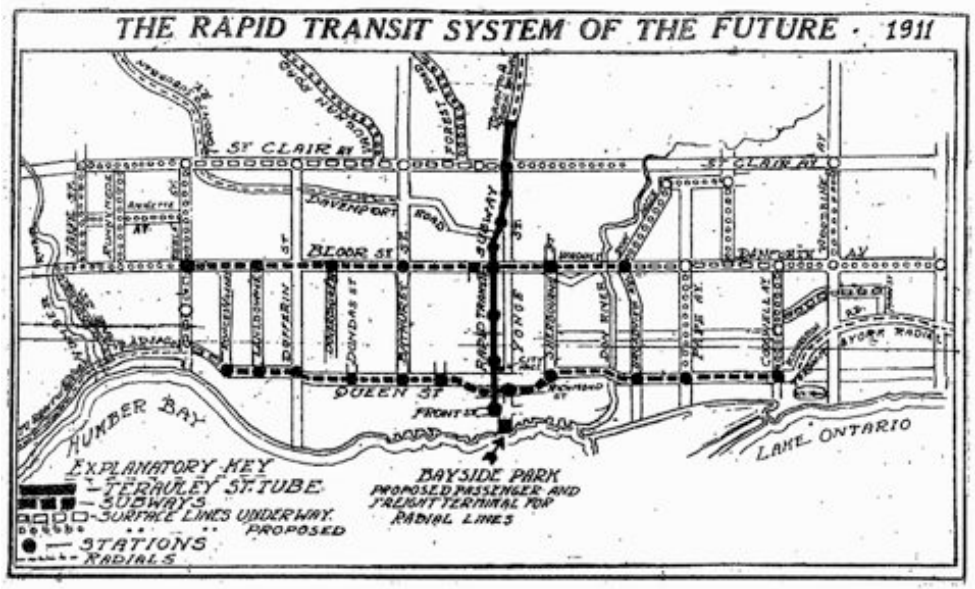

Toronto City Engineer's streetcar subway plan 1911

Ed Levy on Rapid Transit Planning

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on Yonge Street. The City Engineer responded with a variant plan that placed the downtown section of the main north-south streetcar subway under today's Bay Street in order to avoid the construction difficulties of using parts of Yonge Street, and, in particular, conflict with Toronto's franchised private streetcar operator William Mackenzie (Yonge being his busiest and most profitable streetcar route).

In 1912, the City engaged Chicago consulting electrical engineer Bion J. Arnold to develop a streetcar subway plan. His report presented a Yonge streetcar subway that was fed by the City's own newly built suburban streetcar lines, and proposed lines, mainly in the northwest and easterly areas of Toronto's recently annexed districts where Mackenzie refused to extend his Toronto Railway Company (TRC) tracks. Arnold proposed a branch streetcar subway off the Yonge subway west on Bloor to Danforth Avenue. Following the Boston model, multiple streetcar lines would have fed into and used the streetcar subways.

Levy highlights the network features of all these early plans. Rapid transit planning was, however, put on hold through the 1920s when the City took over the TRC which required complete rebuilding and new cars. Interest in rapid transit would not be revived until after the Great Depression in the 1940s.

There is one legacy of this early rapid transit planning. When the Bloor Street Viaduct was built, opening in 1918, it was built with a streetcar subway passage under the main road deck, later used by the TTC's Bloor-Danforth heavy subway line opened in 1966. (...to be continued.) ■

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Editor: Tony Turrittin
(turritti@hotmail.com)
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Board Meetings

Transport Action Ontario's next Board meetings: Thursdays, August 4, September 8, October 5, November 3, and December 1, 2011. We meet at 215 Spadina Ave., Toronto, starting at 5.30 pm. If you wish to participate, please contact Peter Miasek at 905-477-8636 or by email at dmiasek @rogers.com to confirm, as date, time and place are subject to change. We welcome attendance by members and people interested in our advocacy. ■

MEMBERSHIP AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Transport Action Ontario: Working for environmentally, socially and economically sustainable transportation policies and actions.

Email address:
ontario@transport-action.ca.
Mailing address: Box 6418, Sta. A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X3.
Telephone: 416.504.3934 or toll free long-distance 1.866.542.1067 or contact our President: 905-477-8636.

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Our website is www.transport-action.ca/ontario. A membership form is available at this website. Membership may be paid by credit card using PayPal.