



# Western Newsletter

## Transport 2000 Canada

*Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba & Saskatchewan*



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Amtrak's Cascades service has been granted a fee waiver by the CBSA for this train to start in Vancouver, BC instead of Bellingham (shown near Edmonds, WA) for the period immediately surrounding and including the Olympics. We're working to extend the waiver. More information on page 7. Photo Credit: Evan Garrett.

### TRANSIT PETITION IN REGINA

In Regina, 7,701 signatures, gathered in less than 3 months, in the coldest winter ever, were presented to a City Council Committee. We petitioned for public transit service on holidays (there is none for now), and more on Sundays (currently, only noon to 6pm). Fifty petitioners nearly filled the council chamber on a bitter, icy day. The councillors were impressed; the transit administration were encouraged, as they already know this is a prime concern that needs righting. We challenged council to adjust priorities, to recognize efficient,

usable, affordable, accessible public transit as vital to the well-being of the city, now and into the hazardous future. David Onodera, our fine new Director of Transit said "We have to look at the cost of managing the whole city, asking "Should we widen a road, or put more investment into transit ?" We would add "or build a domed stadium?!"

The petition campaign was organized by the Regina Citizens' Public Transit Coalition, through which Transport 2000 works on transit issues. A host of people, many unknown to us, gathered

signatures: at bus stops, on the buses, at work places, in churches, universities, union meetings, food bank, and many more. We listened to strangers telling their desperate need for transit, even on holidays and Sundays mornings. "Getting to work" was mentioned most often, then "getting to church". People who say they don't use the bus, realized that if the folk who service us in restaurants, and stores and hospitals need transit to get to work, then we ALL need it. Business managers spoke of their problem getting workers as well as customers, when there is no

*Continued on page 2*

TRANSIT PETITION (CONTINUED)

transit. Newcomers and tourists are appalled that no bus operates on a holiday in this capital city. So for the economy, as well as social justice, transit is vital.

Regina has been undergoing a transit review. The consultants' recommendations should appear soon. Then comes the long process of finally going to city council and the Budget. Onodera is working on earlier ways to deal with the holiday/Sunday issue. We insist absolutely that fares must not be raised to pay for it, as that would further penalize transit-dependent people, and reduce transit ridership.

In this campaign, we learned many things:

1. To talk to strangers, listen to their stories with respect.
2. To accomplish something good by working together: my name plus your name... each of us from varied backgrounds and faiths and social status, each of us important.
3. To discover skills and courage we didn't know we had: "shy" people daring to gather signatures, or even speak to the Council Committee, because we cared so much.

4. To see the connection between transit and faith, between transit and community, between transit and climate upheaval, between transit and global well-being - because everything is related in this wondrous cosmic web.

The Regina Citizens' Public Transit coalition is the group which finally achieved the \$15 monthly transit pass for persons on social assistance. We also work on issues of pedestrian safety: snow clearance, working with the Union of Postal Workers, disability issues, and the UPass vote at the University of Regina. We have a good, mutually respectful and appreciative relationship with the transit administration, as well as with the Transit Union, and our next move is meetings with our MP's and certain provincial cabinet members, because the basic problem is failure of those levels of government to provide regular, sustainable, sufficient investment in the on-going operation of municipal transit, across the country.

*Catherine Verrall  
cverrall@transport2000.ca*

EDMONTON TRANSIT LIMITED IDLING PROGRAM

ETS has a bus idling initiative that encourages transit operators to shutdown their bus engines at layover points where the bus has a dwell time of three minutes or more. The comfort and safety of passengers is not to be compromised. The following conditions are to be met before the initiative applies:

- Daylight hours only.

- Layover periods of greater than 3 minutes only.
- Effective from May 1 to September 30 only.
- Ambient temperature greater than 10 degrees centigrade.
- Maintain appropriate air brake system pressure.

[Transport 2000 applauds this measure, and encourages other cities to do the same. -Ed.]

PAY TO PARK & RIDE ON CALGARY'S C-TRAIN

March 16 saw the implementation of pay for parking at the following three Calgary Transit C-Train Park and Ride lots: Somerset-Bridlewood Station in the south; McKnight-Westwinds Station in the northeast; and Dalhousie Station in the northwest. Pay for parking at other Calgary Transit parking lots has also begun.

Customers of these lots will be required to pay \$3.00 per day (for regular business hours, evenings and weekends are free.) using the ParkPlus pay machines located at each station. They can pay with cash (coins), credit card or by their cellphone.

Funds generated from parking revenues will be reinvested to ensure Calgary Transit continues to operate a clean, safe, well-maintained transit system.

"Calgarians have requested enhancements to the transit service," said Calgary Transit spokesman Ron Collins. "The \$3.00 per day parking fee will allow us to provide additional cleaning, security and maintenance."

The ParkPlus pay machines are being installed and maintained by the Calgary Parking Authority.

[Editor's note: Transport 2000 applauds the parking fee as a way to encourage vehicle owners to leave the cars at home and take transit from home all the way to work as a way to avoid the fee. We also are calling on Calgary Transit to improve the frequency of the Feeder Bus system to further the usage of transit in Calgary.]

## A FASTER LRT

[This appeared in the Saskatoon StarPhoenix in the Letters to the Editor -Ed.]

Dear Editor,

Futurail was pleased that its presentation to the Road Map 2020 forum initiated discussion on the need for the City of Saskatoon to begin planning for the future of rapid transit. However, to suggest that it will be decades before a light rail transit system would be up and running in the city is far too pessimistic.

There are mechanisms and technologies that the city could implement on a test basis similar to what Ottawa did early in this decade, which is to have a LRT system that would use diesel powered light rail vehicles on existing freight railway tracks. An ideal location is the CPR line that runs from Sutherland, past the university and through the downtown to Confederation.

Such a modest system would gauge the impact of LRT and how much utilization such a system would have. The cost of this pilot project would be relatively low compared with a direct installation of an electric purpose built LRT line.

However, electrification and dedicated track could be put in place once the system had proven its effectiveness and capital was built up to construct such a system. Planning and even the implementation of a diesel light rail transit pilot project should take place before the 400,000 population number is reached. This would give plenty of time for Saskatoon to weigh its options.

We would suggest this pilot project could be undertaken within the next five to eight years.

Futurail was formed out of the efforts to save the CN Saskatoon-Regina Railway line. The ongoing effort to purchase the Davidson-Regina segment of the line has primarily been spearheaded by towns and RMs along the line. These communities are focused on bringing their efforts to a successful conclusion and no longer have a connection to Futurail.

Thank you for your interest,

*George R. Wooldridge  
Futurail Senior Associate*

## FARMERS INVEST IN SHORT-LINE RAILWAY

A newly formed company, led by farmers, is getting into the railway business in southern Manitoba, a move it expects will save grain growers about \$1,600 in shipping and handling charges on every rail car they load.

The Boundary Trail Railway Co. is days away from closing a deal to buy a 37-kilometre stretch of abandoned CP Rail track between Morden and Binney, just west of Manitou.

Kevin Friesen, a Manitou producer who heads the BTRC, said about 80 area farmers have invested \$1.25 million in the company. The province, the RM of Pembina and a Winnipeg-based grain company, Mission Terminal, which assists farmers who want to load their own rail cars, have also put in money.

On Tuesday, Agriculture Minister Rosann Wowchuk announced the province would provide a forgivable loan of \$615,000 to the company.

"I really do believe that maintaining this section of railway will be a positive move for the region and that local ownership can make short lines like these a viable alternative (to) trucking," Wowchuk told a news conference.

She said if farmers living near the rail line don't have to truck their grain great distances to market, it will save wear and tear on provincial roads. And since rail hauling is more fuel efficient than truck hauling, the short-line railway will also be good for the environment. One rail car holds as much grain as three semi-trailers trucks. Boundary Trail expects that up to 100 rail cars will move on its line by the end of July and at least 250 by the end of the year.

Friesen said the first grain cars will be shipped from the newly acquired rail line within weeks. Once that happens, he said, he expects more farmers will invest in the company.

Boundary Trail has signed a three-year deal with the Central Canadian Railway to perform track maintenance and to pull rail cars along the line to and from Morden, the point at which they hook up with the CP Rail system. CP will also provide the rail cars.

*Byline: Larry Kusch, Winnipeg Free Press*

## EDMONTON SHUTS TROLLEY BUSES DOWN EARLY

Edmonton Transit driver Bill McDonald has shuttled passengers around the city on four generations of trolley buses over the past 32 years.

Wearing an "I love trolleys" pin on Saturday, McDonald got behind the wheel one last time to take a group of nostalgic passengers on their final trolley run.

"It's a sad day," said McDonald, 53. "The trolley buses have been a gift to Edmontonians. They've served the citizens well."

Passengers rode route No. 3 for free on May 2nd in a red-and-cream Brill trolley bus from the 1940s, brought out of the city's heritage fleet especially for the final ceremonial ride.

McDonald blew the horn as passengers waved out open windows to folks on the street.

There's nothing quite like the resonance of a trolley on the road, McDonald said. The sound of distant thunder on the prairie, "that's the sound you want to hear," he said.

"They are quick on the takeoff, they are warmer in the winter, and they're quiet."

They are also expensive to replace and operate. That's why, after years of debate, city council voted last spring to phase them out by April 2010. Last week, councillors decided to move up that timetable by a year and immediately decommission the entire fleet to shave \$756,000 off the cash-strapped 2009 budget.

Only 24 of the city's 37 aging trolleys, which date from 1982, were still in active service. Several varieties of trolley buses have operated in Edmonton over the past 70 years.

The decision to decommission the trolleys is expected to save \$100 million during the next two decades. The city had planned to use that money to buy extra hybrid buses, but that plan is on hold for now. Buses are currently being replaced with new diesels, said John Sirovyak, director of fleet and facilities for Edmonton Transit.

But on the last trolley ride, passengers scoffed at a passing diesel. Passionate supporters who fought to

keep the electric system argued trolleys are cleaner and quieter than gas-powered vehicles, and the price of electricity is likely to be more stable than the price of oil.

People on the final trolley trip gabbed about past rides and griped about the decision to park them for good. "This is actually quite sad," said teacher Natalia Gago-Esteves, riding with her 11-year-old son, Phillip Esteves. "When I was a kid, we used to take the No. 3 all the time. Bus was the lifeline for everything. It was the main public transportation. Everybody took it."

Barry Biglow, 73, clipped on a black bowtie for

what he called a "funeral" for trolleys. The retired CN Rail electrical engineer rode one for the first time as a boy in Winnipeg in 1940, and he has been riding them ever since.

Vancouver is now the only Canadian city left with a trolley fleet.

Registered nurse Myra Knelsen, 28, and her four-

year-old daughter, Aarilynn, sat at the back and gazed at vintage overhead advertisements for Maple Leaf soap flakes, triple-action Perfex bleach and Lifebuoy soap. "I like the pictures and the lights," said Aarilyn as they rumbled down 115th Avenue.

ETS driver Andrew Woolner, 41, caught the last trolley after his work shift ended. "There's a mystique to them," said Woolner, who said he loved driving trolleys.

"Anyone can be trained to drive the newer buses, but it takes something special to drive a trolley."

The final goodbye was left to driver Ernie Bastide. He drove a group of invited guests -- including Coun. Ron Hayter, Coun. Don Iveson and the president of the Canadian Urban Transit Association, Michael Roschlau -- before parking the trolley in the Westwood garage for the final time.

"It's the end of an era for Edmonton Transit," Bastide said. "There's a lot of history here. I love this bus -- I really do."

*Andrea Sands, Edmonton Journal*



Trolleys made their last runs in Edmonton, Alberta on May 2, 2009.  
Photo credit to James Paull

## EDMONTON'S LRT SYSTEM EXPANDS

Edmonton's LRT is being expanded from Clareview to the proposed Gorman Towne Centre in the first northeastern extension of the system since it was built more than 30 years ago.

The project was announced Thursday as part of \$300-million worth of "shovel ready" LRT upgrades being funded by the city, provincial and federal governments to improve infrastructure and stimulate the economy.

"It's a big step forward towards a greener Edmonton and a greener Alberta," Premier Ed Stelmach said.

"It's in keeping with the overall goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions... and reduce much of the congestion we have on our city streets."

Construction could start within a few months and should be completed by early 2012 at the latest, transportation general manager Bob Boutilier said.

The line will mainly follow the CN rail right-of-way leading to the station and parking lot near 153rd Avenue and Victoria Trail.

The project, with a total cost of \$210 million, is a good opportunity to reach commuters in Fort Saskatchewan and other outlying areas as part of a regional transit plan, he said.

While the potential boost in ridership from opening Gorman station hasn't been studied, it's needed to help develop public transit, Boutilier said.

"All of that increases the productivity of the LRT system. I said I would wear a tutu and run across Churchill Square if I could get that type of money."

Other projects are:

- Constructing the future Eaux Claires transit centre and 350-stall parking lot, at 97th Street and 157th Avenue.



- Creating the 1,200-1,400 space Heritage Valley park-and-ride lot southwest of Ellerslie Road and 127th Street, intended to be linked by shuttle bus to the Century Park LRT station.

- Expanding parking at the new Lewis Estates transit centre, 87th Avenue and 199th Street, to 700 stalls from 400.

- Upgraded LRT signal lights from downtown to Clareview.

- Extending platforms on the five current and future LRT stations south of university to five cars long from four cars (they were originally designed for four cars when funding was tight).

The announcement came

less than a week after the first new stations in three years opened at McKernan/Belgravia and South Campus, with the south line planned to be completed to Century Park next April.

The top LRT priority remains the \$800-million line from downtown to NAIT, for which land is already being purchased and a tunnel is being put under the new Epcor Tower.

Boutilier still expects it will receive funding from the provincial Green Trip program. "This isn't taking money away from one project to another. This is money for additional stuff."

Jason Roth, director of advocacy for the NAIT students association, was disappointed the

extension to the school wasn't part of the new funding, but said it will cost far more than what was provided by the other levels of government.

"The transportation department is saying one won't impact the other, and I hope that's the case.

"The sooner we get the NAIT LRT line constructed, the better. I don't think the city had enough money to proceed ... as quickly as they would like."

Transportation officials will outline their plans for the future LRT network at a public hearing June 2. Councillors are scheduled to choose routes to the west and Mill Woods in November.

*Gordon Kent - The Edmonton Journal*

## PRAIRIE RAILWAY LINE NOTES

[Some further notes regarding prairie railway lines sent in. Thanks Martin for this! -Ed.]

### 1) NAPINKA/LA RIVIERE Subdivisions, Manitoba

It is positive to be able to report that the purchase of the abbreviated operational line from Binneys Corner to Morden, from CPR, has been concluded. The government of Manitoba stepped forward with the funding necessary to bridge the gap between the amount generated by the Boundary Trail Railway Company and the purchase price. The closing date was extended twice from the previously reported deadline of 30th November 2008. The increased interest of all levels of government in infrastructure project expenditure appears to have been the clincher in this case.

A meeting was held on 19th March which resulted in the election of a new Board of Directors to focus on operational challenges. A presentation occurred at the meeting, by Quaker Oats company representatives. Quaker have expressed an interest in buying oats directly from producers using rail transportation. The initial requirement is for approximately 1000 cars per year. This development is very encouraging in ensuring the early financial viability of the 23 mile line.

### 2) CRAIK(SOUTH) Subdivision, Saskatchewan

The deal to conclude the purchase of the southern portion of the CN Craik subdivision is expected to be finalized by 1st June with the Last Mountain Railway planning to be moving

traffic this coming summer. Major media announcements are expected in early June. A March transfer of ownership had been expected but delays were encountered as a result of CN's legal team being focused on the acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Railway, a Chicago regional railway being purchased from US Steel, at very short notice. This rush was primarily a result of the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) long delayed approval for the acquisition to proceed.

### 3) DRUMHELLER Subdivision, Alberta

Unfortunately the recent rumours of the potential abandonment of this subdivision are now a reality with the official listing of the Lyalta - Hanna section on CN's latest edition of the Three Year Network Plan. This will result in the balance of the line from Calgary to Lyalta and from Saskatoon to Hanna becoming grain dependent spurs with as required service. All through traffic, including daily intermodal flows will be routed through Edmonton. Businesses that have been totally rail reliant such as W.R. Ralston, a major plastics producer, based in Drumheller will

be hugely impacted by increased transportation and production costs. Ralston has been considering relocating to Standard at the head of the Irricana subdivision, which branches from CP's main line at Bassano. However the future of the Irricana is far from secure, with the County of Wheatland only committing to purchasing the right of way and not the trackage. The inclusion of the Drumheller sub as a line to be discontinued by CN is further evidence that both Class 1 carriers are continuing their strategies of shedding ever more track in favour of ever more consolidated "core" high density networks.

Here is an opportunity and a challenge for our Alberta based membership to be practical activists in campaigning and encouraging communities and businesses along that line to consider the short line solution. Those involved with other short-line projects, particularly in Saskatchewan, that have come to fruition may not have a template with guaranteed results but can certainly provide useful guidance and assistance, if requested.

*Martin Wooldridge  
dreenhill@gmail.com.*

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## WESTERN NEWSLETTER EDITOR WANTED

I will admit, the production of this rather big issue of the Western Newsletter is due mainly in part to the fact that I'm quite late with it. For that, I do apologize. Unfortunately, with the new career I'm in for my paid employment, I'm finding the amount of time I can devote to producing the Western

Newsletter to be rather limited. I'm willing to stay on as VP Alberta for T2000 Prairie, but the newsletter needs to be handed off to someone with more time to put the articles together.

If you figure you've got enough time to put together four issues a year of this newsletter, please drop me a line. - Jon

## CALGARY TOUTS CARPOOL LANES

A 220-kilometre network of high-occupancy-vehicle lanes through-out Calgary is being proposed to drop the number of vehicles going into downtown.

Country Hills and John Laurie boulevards, Macleod and Glenmore trails and 52nd Street East are some of the roads the city has pinpointed to make up the network.

But don't expect special carpool and bus lanes soon.

It could be decades before the full network is in place and, in some cases, the lanes might not be added until traffic actually gets worse.

The proposed web of roads touches virtually every edge of Calgary, with many of them already well-travelled routes that city staff believe could benefit from dedicated spaces for carpoolers and buses.

"It's about making better use of what we have," said Don Mulligan, the city's director of transportation planning.

HOV lanes include bus lanes, a shoulder for transit and carpool lanes, and are typically reserved for vehicles with two or more people.

Roads with good connectivity, relatively higher speeds and fewer traffic lights make better candidates for HOV lanes, Mulligan said.

Anne Marie Thornton, who runs the carpool.ca website that has about 3,500 people from Calgary and region registered, said putting in the lanes is a great way of dealing with the sprawl that has seen many Calgary commutes take longer and longer.

"It's definitely an incentive," she said of the proposed lanes. "There has to be some way of encouraging people to carpool aside from the cost savings."

Carpooling has actually dropped as a trend in Canada recently because lower gas prices have left people feeling less of a pinch at the pumps, she said. But making travel times faster—even if it will take a while to implement the lanes—will likely nudge people to carpool, she said.

Not every road mapped out on the HOV grid will be for carpoolers, Mulligan said. Roads with more traffic lights such as Centre Street North are better for bus-only lanes, while free-flowing arteries such as Crowchild Trail and McKnight Boulevard offer more advantages for carpool lanes.

Experience from other cities has shown it's better to actually add a new HOV lane than convert an existing one, Mulligan said, partially because of the public outcry that comes from taking away a lane.

That means many of the lanes might not be added until widening projects happen, he said, and that construction likely won't start until commute times actually rise even further.

Ald. John Mar, who asked city staff to come up with the proposed network, said HOV lanes are about giving people choices other than driving alone in their cars. Making transit more efficient or dropping travel times for carpoolers do that, he said. But other incentives ought to be considered on top of the lanes, he said, including discounted parking rates for registered carpoolers.

"You've got to make it worth their while to change the behaviour," he said.

Ald. Ray Jones said while he liked the HOV idea, he's not sure it will really change people's patterns.

"As much as we try to push transit, I don't think you're going to get Calgarians out of their cars," he said. "I'm not saying it won't work, I'm just thinking of all the (angry) phone calls we're going to get (over new HOV lanes)."

Mulligan said HOV lanes will only work with enforcement to make sure people alone in their cars aren't using them.

"We've all heard the stories of people using inflatable dolls in their car, things like that," he said. "People will always try to cheat the system."

The proposal heads to a city committee next week and, if approved, would go to city council before the end of the month.

*Joel Kom - Calgary Herald*

[Editor's note: Transport 2000 certainly promotes the use of Public Transit which would be the primary user of the HOV lanes. The lanes would hopefully reduce transit travel time and congestion on the roads.

The Fraser Institute tends to disagree with the concept and promotes HOT (High Occupancy Toll) lanes, free for high occupancy vehicles or a toll for single occupancy vehicles. An interesting concept, but doesn't necessarily reduce the amount of people driving alone in their vehicles. Time will tell on this story! -Jon]

## SECOND TRAIN TO VANCOUVER UPDATE

[Ed. Note: Transport 2000 Canada and numerous people and organizations on both sides of the border have continued to work with each other to continue pressuring the CBSA to either extend or eliminate their demands for customs clearance fees for the second frequency into Vancouver, BC. We've also drafted a letter to the CBSA President Stephen Rigby, Public Safety Minister Peter van Loan and many others in Ottawa to persuade them in the right direction. Following is the letter to Minister van Loan. -Jon]

Dear Minister van Loan,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) for the recent decision to provide customs clearance services, at no cost, to a second Amtrak Cascades service to Vancouver, British Columbia before, during, and for a brief time after the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games in February 2010. While we recognize that this is a step in the right direction, we urge you to expand the fee waiver period from June 1, 2009 to June 1, 2010 to allow commencement of service as proposed by Amtrak and Washington State Department of Transportation.

Earlier implementation of the second train service would allow Amtrak to test and market the service during the busy summer tourism and cruise ship season. Additionally, based on a study by the Border Policy Research Institute of Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA, implementation of the service over a year would allow the

federal, provincial and municipal governments in Canada to collect \$1.87 million in GST, PST and room taxes combined as a result of increased rail passenger travel. The revenue collected by increased tourism activity in British Columbia more than offsets the proposed cost recovery fees proposed by CBSA. As you know, 35,000 passengers rode the train into Vancouver in 2008 and, as noted in the August 25, 2008 letter from Governor Gregoire, the single train service generated \$20 million per year in tourism spending for British Columbia and Canada. We expect the second train to Vancouver to nearly double ridership and spending.

The service provided by CBSA plays a vital role in the safety, security and economic partnership of both countries. We appreciate the excellent work of the CBSA in completing a review of passenger clearance service levels in the air mode. Passenger clearance services are provided cost free at major airports in Canada and we applaud the decision by the Government of Canada to make further investments to expand these publicly funded services as part of a larger Air Services Policy Framework.

We recognize that CBSA is continuing to work with industry stakeholders to extend the Core Services Review of passenger services to ferry and rail modes and we extend an offer to organize Northwest tourism and transportation leaders to work with CBSA in this review. Pending that review, which you indicate that you will begin in the near future, we urge you to expand the waiver

period for passenger rail for at least a year to take advantage of the critical summer tourism season. We would note that Amtrak Cascades service to Canada was initiated in 1994 with no imposition of fee.

Please address your correspondence to PNWER Transportation Working Group, Attn: Bruce Agnew, Co-Chair, 2200 Alaskan Way, Suite 460, Seattle, WA 98121, or by e-mail to [transportation@pnwer.org](mailto:transportation@pnwer.org). We look forward to your reply.

Signed,

- Bruce Agnew, Director, Cascadia Center
- Matt Morrison, Executive Director, PNWER
- Greg Robertson, Mayor, City of Vancouver
- Mathew Coyne, Executive Director, Tourism Burnaby
- Trevor Roald, Vice President, Vancouver AM Tourism Association
- James Chase, CEO, BC Hotel Association
- Rod Harrison, President & CEO, Tourism British Columbia
- Randy Williams, President & CEO, Tourism Industry Association of Canada
- Jim Storie, Chair, Council of Tourism Associations of BC
- David Jeanes, President, T2000
- Geoffrey Howes, Chair, Tourism Vancouver
- Darrell Bryan, President & CEO, Victoria Clipper
- Robert Gialloredo, CEO, Tourism Victoria
- Rick Antonson, President & CEO, Tourism Vancouver
- Thomas Prendergast, CEO, Translink

# THE FULL STORY ABOUT AMTRAK'S SECOND TRAIN

## Introduction

Amtrak Cascades is the name given to inter-city rail service between Vancouver BC and Eugene Oregon. It is run by Amtrak with funding from the State of Washington and Oregon. Currently there are four daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, two between Portland and Eugene, but only one between Vancouver and Seattle. The current round trip between Seattle and Vancouver is geared towards people coming from Seattle, as it leaves Seattle in the early morning and returns in the late evening. For a number of years the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has been planning a second train that would leave Vancouver in the morning and return in the evening. This train would have the added benefit of providing through service to Portland and connections to other Amtrak trains for destinations further east and south.

## Second Train

Since September 1999 there has been twice-daily service between Bellingham and Seattle. This is the train that was planned to be extended to Vancouver. Before that could happen, a siding had to be built in Delta (Colebrook), BC. For the first time since the cancellation of BC Rail passenger services, the BC government announced that it would invest in inter-city, passenger rail.

The BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure announced on March 1, 2007 it would contribute up to \$4.5 million to the siding project, jointly funded with the BNSF railway and Amtrak for a total project cost of \$7 million. The BC government boasted that the second train would inject \$13.9 million into BC's economy. The siding was completed in April 2008 and WSDOT announced that the second train could be running by the summer of 2008..



Pictured at South Colebrook, Amtrak Cascades train 510 is northbound to Vancouver, BC. Photo by Christian Vazzaz

## CBSA Fumbling

A year later and there is no second train. Why? Through an Freedom of Information request to the Canadian federal government facilitated by Ken Rubin, Transport 2000 has learned some disturbing facts.

Amtrak submitted a request to provide clearance services in June 2008 for a start date of August 2008. They received approval for clearance services from the US Customs and Border Patrol. Their Canadian counterparts were not so quick in replying and when they did, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) wanted \$ 1,500

per day or \$547,500 per year to serve this train. When the first train started operating in 1994 there was no charge as Canada did not have to subsidise this service. Apparently the CBSA's Rail/Mail/Sail customs offices are only open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and could not serve the 11:40 p.m. arrival of the second train. CBSA calls this a new facility and wants to be reimbursed. Nowhere else is an additional plane or bus or car called a new facility, but a train appears to be a different matter.

Needless to say Amtrak refuses to pay.

Washington State has studied the impact of the existing train. American passengers coming to Canada spend money on hotels, meals transportation, and goods and services. Based on this analysis, the second train is expected to generate US \$18 million in visitor expenditures per year,

which means about US\$765,000 GST revenue in for the Federal Government. The Federal Government profits, even if we assume the dollar at par.

Why is the Canadian Government being so obstinate in requiring extra fees? It seems they want to set a precedent. Soon no doubt everybody will have to pay a fee to cross into Canada. If it works for trains, why not charge for planes, buses, cruise ships and passenger cars?

There are other options for processing rail passengers from the US late at night. The rail

*Continued on page 10*

border crossing is very close to the Peach Arch highway crossing. The CSBA post there is staffed, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. CBSA could run a van with officers to Blaine, board the train, process passengers and get off at White Rock. Any inadmissible passengers could be promptly returned to the US.

Additionally, there's rumours that CSBA wants to have all passengers on all trains entering Canada get off and have passport and luggage inspection at the border. It was easier to cross the Iron curtain during the Cold War.

**Olympic plan**

On April 11th the Vancouver Sun reported that there was a tentative agreement to provide funding for the second train. However, this funding would only enable the train to run a few weeks prior to, during and for an indefinite period after the Winter Olympics. There is no plan for long term funding that would enable the second train to start running this summer. The CBSA is adamant that it be compensated for providing clearance services. WSDOT would like to begin operating the train this summer in

order to market the service and build up ridership. Letters to the Federal Ministers of Public Safety and Transportation have gone unanswered.

**Future**

The long range plan for Amtrak Cascades service produced by WSDOT and available on their website shows a total of four round trips between Vancouver and Seattle by 2023, along with a reduction of the four hour travel time to two and a half hours. This would make the trip very competitive with car and even air travel between the two cities. To achieve this level of service would require substantial improvements between Pacific Central Station and the border, such as replacement of the Fraser River rail bridge and improvements to track, new sidings, and signals. So far, the federal and provincial governments have shown little interest in passenger rail in British Columbia. The federal government has announced new funding for VIA Rail, but the bulk of the funding will go to improvements in the Quebec - Windsor corridor. The third largest city in Canada has VIA

service only three times per week. Perhaps, VIA should work with Amtrak to jointly operate Cascades service as they do for the Toronto - New York train.

Serious consideration should go to providing inspection services on board the trains as is done in other countries. This would make the service faster as passengers wouldn't have to wait in line at Pacific Central station after getting off the train. It would also allow the train to make to stop in White Rock and Surrey. Pacific Central in Vancouver is not convenient for people from south of the Fraser River, so this would increase ridership. What about a station right at the border with a park and ride lot and a local bus loop? This might be more efficient for the CBSA by being close to the busy Peace Arch automobile crossing.

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