



# Western Newsletter

## Transport Action Canada

*Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba & Saskatchewan*



*Olympic Line Streetcar photo by Matthew Buchanan.*

### FROM THE EDITOR

By now the Olympic line trams supplied by the city of Brussels are on their way back to Europe. For two months Vancouverites were treated to a modern European style low-floor tram 18 hours per day every 10 minutes. The free service went from Olympic Village Canada Line Station to Granville Island. The service was phenomenally successful with over 500,000 riders in two months. For many people this was their first ex-

perience on a rail vehicle other than SkyTrain and most people were impressed with the smooth quiet vehicles.

During the Olympics TransLink offered extra increased service such as three SeaBus's running on 10 minute headways, rush-hour SkyTrain service all day long, extra buses utilizing special transit-only 'Olympic Lanes' and extra West Coast Express service provided by Canadian Pacific Railway.

Apparently TransLink was paid \$17 million ? by the Vancouver Olympic Committee for the extra services for the two week period. Extrapolating that over a full year would require \$442 million which TransLink doesn't have right now, and the province doesn't want to give them the tools to raise the necessary money such as tolls, vehicle levies, or distance based car insurance. In the meantime, transit surface is back to normal and many Olympic riders are back to their cars. Is the opportunity lost?

*M. Buchanan.*

### EDITOR'S NOTE

*A new editor must be found for the Western Newsletter beginning after the next issue. Due to too many other responsibilities I can no longer perform editing duties. Please contact Matthew or Peter if you're interested in being editor.*

*M. Buchanan.*

### In this Issue

- ✿ Vancouver Olympic line
- ✿ Editorial - Idling
- ✿ Regina Transit Plan
- ✿ BC President's message
- ✿ Book Reviews
- ✿ Victoria Working Group started
- ✿ BC News
- ✿ Winnipeg Busway Progress
- ✿ Calgary Logistics park
- ✿ Winnipeg LRT Plan
- ✿ Boundary Trails short line
- ✿ Edmonton LRT Expansion
- ✿ Poem: beach train in the thirties
- ✿ Prairie AGM notice

## GOOD NEWS! REGINA'S TRANSIT INVESTMENT PLAN

The Long-awaited Transit Investment Plan (TIP) has been approved by Regina City Council. Based on a 2-year process led by Burnaby-based AECOM, this comprehensive transit review involved widespread and varied public consultations. Regina Transit Administration then analysed AECOM's report and developed an Action Plan for going forward.

Transport Action members are a large part of the very active Regina Citizen's Public Transit Coalition. The Plan lists our Coalition as one of transit's strong partnerships. We have had numerous, helpful meetings with senior staff. We are pleased to see that both consultants and staff were really listening to the concerns we have been clamouring about. Enhanced marketing will focus on attracting "choice riders"- those who are free to choose transit, or not -, while better serving those dependent on transit. More direct and automobile-competitive route networks, linked with small neighbourhood buses, will shorten travel time. Customer information will be greatly improved. Transit will develop stronger partnerships with outside groups, such as the Saskatchewan Transportation (bus) Company, private businesses, school boards, universities and colleges.

Transport Action, through the Coalition, has been advocating persistently for accessibility for persons with disabilities. (The Coalition has 3 active members who are confined to motor-chairs). We recognize the Plan's commitment to 100% low floor bus fleet by 2016, and we know that each new bus will be low-floor. But until all are low-floor, the riders dependent on them still will have extreme problems in traveling and making transfers.

Efficient public transit depends upon compact, smart, urban planning. Transport Action has made many presentations to City Council regarding ever-more sprawling development. We note the consultants' recommendation to "enhance the integration of transit in the land development process" As Regina Transit attempts to serve sprawling development, more challenges are created, sucking resources from basic services. For example, Transit has already introduced service to the new WalMart Supercentre in the new Harbour Landing Development. It is good to provide transit for the 300 WalMart workers as well as customers, but this need shows that sprawl costs. And why is it not WalMart which must pay for the service to its store, as a condition of being allowed to expand to the city fringe?

On the other hand, last March, our Coalition presented City Council with a petition bearing 7,700 signatures, beseeching for transit service on holidays, and more weekend service. (Transit then, with no extra money, did manage to provide extended Sunday service, but at the cost of less frequency and reduced routes.) Although the consultants' report calls for what we wanted, the Action Plan states "additional new services will be introduced as resources allow" - only then.

Despite these cautions, we have confidence that the many new initiatives will give markedly better transit service which is also more efficient and cost-effective. Coalition members have been meeting with federal and provincial politicians, appealing for stable transit funding. The sincere and respectful commitment of transit staff, and the persistence of us, the public, are our best assets.

This Plan is to be brought into being over 10 years. We must keep on reminding council that wise "investment" is for well-being into the future. The unprecedented global crisis we live in demands that we give priority to major investment toward human and planetary well-being. Good public transit is a survival necessity for a smart society. The Plan aims to make "transit the mode of choice for urban mobility" in our city. Wherever we are, and whatever we can do, this is our working goal as members of Transport Action.

*Catherine Verrall, Transport Action Prairie President.*

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## BC NEWS BRIEFS

- Issues that Transport Action have been working on include a letter regarding Canadian Pacific's proposed abandonment of the Sicamous to Armstrong branch line sent to the BC government. The Minister of Transport, Judith Reid, replied saying that BC has no policy on purchasing rail rights of way.
- The second Amtrak daily train has been extended until the end of September. We are still waiting for the CBSA's demands of money from Amtrak to be waived and the train will be made permanent. Transport Action BC must press the BC government to make infrastructure investments to support this service.
- The Broadway corridor rapid transit workshops put on by the City of Vancouver and TransLink are continuing. Transport Action BC members are attending the workshops to learn more and contribute.

*Matthew Buchanan.*

## WINNIPEG BUSWAY PROGRESS

When I first reported on this, I remarked that at several places on the Phase 1 route, there just wouldn't be sufficient room for the busway and for regular traffic lanes. Well, I was right, but the problem has been solved in the most obvious fashion - which was the last one I expected.

The route is closely beside the CN Rivers Sub. mainline for most of its length, until it dives under the railway and surfaces on the other side to proceed to Jubilee Avenue. For the southbound portion, the City appears to have purchased or pre-empted sufficient space from the railway right-of-way to accommodate the busway, having made some rather small changes in the traffic lanes as well. The first portion, which runs from Main Street along Stradbroke Avenue to Donald Street, has been fitted in to the landscape by shaving many feet from the CN embankment (which is on a slight uphill grade for the distance). It's still tight but sufficient. This has resulted in the removal of a treed strip between the road and the railway; a pity but it does offer a unique viewpoint for photos. Very large steel walls have been driven into the ground to support what's left of the sloping side of the embankment. So construction is proceeding properly to all appearances.

However, the inevitable accompaniment of any construction project - cost overrun - has already begun to occur. The city had set aside \$12.7 million to acquire land around the underground portion, but this has already increased to \$18.2 million. The report doesn't say if more money will be needed. It does say that the overrun will come from other parts of the budget for the project. Finally, it notes that funding for Phase II of the busway has not been secured.

## CALGARY COINCIDENCES

It's been announced that two major developments near Calgary will be undertaken: both are projects on the order of \$100 million. One is a Walmart distribution centre; the other is a CN intermodal yard and industrial park. It is also the case that CN wants to abandon the rail line between Saskatoon and Calgary, leaving themselves dependent on the Edmonton-Calgary line. The recent potash train derailment near Rivers, MB, demonstrates the urgent need for alternate routes. In Manitoba, CN was able

to reroute its trains. Will there be an alternate route if the Calgary-Edmonton line is closed? If not, one has to wonder about the wisdom of either decision.

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## WINNIPEG MAYOR KATZ GOES BIG-TIME FOR LRT

A Winnipeg Free Press article stated (Feb 22) that Mr. Katz plans to try to persuade the provincial and federal governments to help fund a light-rail rapid transit system for Winnipeg. He envisages four routes from the outskirts to the centre of the city, and if funding is available, a line to the airport. (A transportation study is currently being prepared by city planners - as if it hasn't already been studied to death). This would cost over \$600 million; an interesting amount when compared to the current busway plan, which will cost \$327 million for a mere nine kilometers; no funding for the second phase is in the city's long-term capital plan. The provincial government is not opposed to the idea, says Transportation Minister Ashton, but feels that LRT should wait on the completion of Phase 2 of the BRT, then "over the next 10, 20, or 30 years there may be discussion about light rail". The province has committed funding for both phases of the BRT. Federal Minister Toews stands with the city on the project, but says that changes in focus have happened from time to time, which have caused delays in commitments.

Katz' actions with regard to rapid transit:

2004 (when he became the mayor) - cancelled previous Mayor Glen Murray's \$50 million BRT plan

2005 - Katz got the federal government to redirect \$43 million from transit to recreation facilities.

2008 - initial funding for transit in Manitoba is announced by the federal government; and the Winnipeg BRT plan is announced. It is very similar to Mayor Murray's but has completely separated bus lanes, which makes it so much more expensive.

2009 - Katz publicly muses about an LRT system.

2010 - today - announces LRT hopes.

## BOUNDARY TRAILS SHORT-LINE SHOWS PROMISE

Once there were elevators and brick factories here, but folks had all but given up hope of any commercial development returning to the tiny community of Darlingford, MB. So the appearance of six spanking new hopper bins on the rail line last year was something of a turnaround. They represented the \$300,000 station grounds built to service the new farmer-owned Boundary Trail Railway Company.

It's the first significant investment here in at least 20 years, says Kim Taylor reeve of the Rural Municipality of Pembina. It's the kind of thing rural reeves definitely like to see. He's not sure how much tax revenue this will ultimately generate in the years ahead. But it's significant. "It certainly increases the tax base. And not only that, but it's the fact that this is generating economic activity in the local area. That's the big thing."

Last year, Pembina municipality turned over \$400,000 in abandonment fees received from CP for its portion of the rail line abandoned in a put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is vote of support. "There's things that can come out of this that we can't even foresee right now," Taylor says. The BTRC became the proud new owner last spring of 23 miles of track, formerly owned by CP between Morden and Binney corner, three miles west of Manitou. It also acquired 33 miles of abandoned right-of-way running beyond Binney through the Pembina Valley to Holmfield just east of Killarney. The farmer-owned company has plans to build two more station grounds similar to Darlingford this year, including one at Manitou and the other at Binney. They've stressed from the start that the wealth created through operating a railway has spinoff benefits to rural communities, Kevin Friesen, BTRC president and Manitou-area farmer, told a Southwest Farm Women's Ag Days seminar

last week. An economic impact study done in advance of purchasing the line showed a potential \$5-million advantage, based on \$1,000 saved per loaded producer car, at 500 cars shipped per annum.

But the BTRC has a long way to go before it's a rural success story. Just six months into operations, their biggest challenge remains convincing more farmers of the advantages of loading producer cars, Friesen said. They also continue to emphasize that the farmer-owned rail line is for all farmers needing to ship grain, not just BTRC shareholders.

*Peter Lacey (Manitoba Co-operator 2010/01/28)*

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## EDITORIAL - PETER LACEY

One of my ongoing projects is discovering ways that we - whoever "we" are - can make simple changes in our lifestyle which won't affect it negatively but which will cut down on the use of fossil fuels in sufficient quantities to make a difference. One of my pieces was published in "Transport Action": its suggestion was to use electrical lawn and garden appliances instead of gasoline-powered ones. I have just read an article which describes an equally straightforward action which has quite staggering consequences if everybody does it.

The article is entitled "Adding up the real cost of a doughnut"; it's by Graeme Fletcher and is published by Canwest News Service. It's about the to-everyone-else irritating habit of lining up in one's car at the coffee shop and the gasoline consumption thus incurred. In particular, the cost of idling in line is quite astonishing.

Mr. Fletcher goes into some detail on the reasons people use to justify idling rather than shutting off and going into the store, and why they don't stand up (assuming modern, efficient engines. If the car isn't modern the figures are much more appalling). The most common one is that it takes less fuel to idle than to restart the car. Not so: idling for just ten seconds uses more fuel than

restarting! Then, it's thought that too much starting reduces the life expectancy of the battery and starter motor. Possibly if one started the car 100 times an hour for weeks at a time this would be true; but idling does more damage to internal engine components than starting can ever do. People say that cars are much more efficient than they used to be, and that pollution is therefore no longer important. True, partly: hydrocarbon (unburnt fuel), carbon monoxide, and nitrous oxide emissions have all dropped over 90% from 1980 levels. But the amount of carbon dioxide produced has not changed, and cannot be reduced: each litre of fuel burned produces about 2.5 kilograms of carbon dioxide. A more subtle argument is that the catalytic converter doesn't work while the engine is being started, so that idling produces less emissions. It apparently takes 25 minutes for the converter to cool down to ineffective temperatures (and they are often mounted near the exhaust these days to keep them warmer), which under normal circumstances is far more time than it takes to walk in and buy.

Nice facts: but not nearly as convincing as the money arguments. Idling in line for just five minutes consumes enough fuel to drive four kilometres. Over a year, that amounts to 51 litres of gas simply wasted. Extended to the whole country, if the estimated 9,300,000 drivers all idle 5 minutes a day (at Tim's or elsewhere; let's be fair - in normal traffic all of us have probably no choice but to idle

five or more minutes a day, so we're talking about "voluntary" idling) for a year, that wastes the staggering total of 1,309,688 litres of gas a year! It's likely that 5 minutes is a rather low daily time, so the figures must be adjusted upwards accordingly. It's bad enough at the low figure; that's 3,274,220 kilograms of carbon dioxide added to the atmosphere every year. And we're talking anything from \$51 and up just to pay for this! Who wants to pay the gas companies one red cent more than we have to? Considering that the number of vehicles on the road is expected to keep on increasing over the next few years, all these numbers will increase.

So the argument seems pretty solid that it's better for the environment and your pocketbook to park and grab. The effort involved in walking to and from the store might even consume enough calories to offset the sugar!

It's a pity to have to note that the author then negates his own thesis by suggesting a \$1 surcharge per Tim's visit "to buy the carbon credits needed to offset the pollution their customers spew needlessly". Carbon credits are merely accounting games that will do nothing to reduce the carbon dioxide in the air.

Tim's patrons! Do your bit for a greener planet: park, don't idle! (Or - heresy - walk to Tim's!)

*Peter Lacey - Manitoba*

**beach train in the thirties**

train's coming across the end of the lake  
 down the cutbank i slide  
 join the crowd on the platform  
 past boatsheds she rumbles  
 creaks to a stop at the red station house  
 steam engine tender mail car then baggage  
 passenger cars far as the eye can see  
 out comes mail wire baskets of milk packed in ice  
 boxes of bread pork 'n beans mushroom soup  
 long rolls of bologna piles of wood pails of paint  
 chattering passengers straggle beside tracks  
 steam hisses powerful drive bars groan  
 gigantic wheels inch ahead then gather speed  
 triumphant the engineer waves to the crowd  
 with a whistle and clickety clack the train's gone

*written for Transport Action  
 by Saskatchewan poet,  
 June Mitchell  
 (another poem in next issue)*

## VICTORIA WORKING GROUP

I am interested in working with a small group of people here in Greater Victoria to improve existing BC Transit bus service in Victoria. The current service is basic at best, and too often, pitiful. Only those who have no other option take transit here. My intention is to work to improve transit so that it is a desirable, competitive and viable transportation option for more people.

Over the last year, I have been talking to transportation-interested people about improving BC Transit service, doing research, documenting, and drafting ideas.

I would now like to approach BC Transit as Transport Action Canada - Victoria, starting with two basic proposals: a) for BC Transit to set up a citizen liaison committee as part of BC Transit's Victoria Regional Transit Commission, and b) to display basic bus information at every bus stop, including route numbers, schedules and small route maps [currently many bus stops simply say Bus Stop and have no other information].

I'll send a draft of the letter/presentation of the above proposals to the Transport Action BC board for input and approval before any action.

If you have any general ideas and input at this point, I'd be happy to hear.

*Rob Thompson, Victoria*

*To get in touch with Rob, contact Matthew Buchanan (see back page)*

## EDMONTON LRT PLANS

The present Light Rail Vehicles in Edmonton use high platforms at the stations. When Edmonton opened its first Light Rail line in 1978,

high platform vehicles were the only ones available. Calgary also has high platforms, but San Diego did not, instead installing lifts on the vehicles. San Diego is now going to low level vehicles. Portland also started out with high level vehicles and using lifts. It now uses low level vehicles, sometimes paired in the peak with a high level vehicle, which have steps.

Edmonton will continue to use high level platforms on its core lines, namely:

LRT 1 - the North-East to Health Science Centre and

LRT 2 - NAIT to Heritage, The NAIT line may in the future link to St. Albert.

Both these lines go through the tunnel downtown and the University

Council has now approved the Stoney Plain Road alignment for a Light Rail Line to West Edmonton via Jasper, Meadowlark, West Edmonton Mall finishing at a Park-and-Ride lot on the Ring Road. It will use Low Floor Light Rail vehicles. Initially It will terminate at Grant McEwan College, but later it will be extended through downtown on 102/102A Avenue on the surface and have an interchange at Churchill Station. The plan is to continue that line to Mill Woods. The ultimate plan is to have alternate trains go to the University, Health Science and then along Whyte Avenue, eventually maybe go to Sherwood Park.

*John Bakker*



*Rendering of proposed low floor LRT (City of Edmonton)*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### RAILWAY BY THE BAY

by: Barry Sanford

Review by John Bakker

During the Christmas Holidays I had the pleasure of reading Barry Sanford's latest book "Railway by the Bay". This book gives a 100 year history of trains at White Rock, Crescent Beach and Ocean Park. Barry Sanford has a very nice writing style and includes many anecdotes in his book. However to me it is also very relevant when there is talk about High Speed Trains between Seattle and Vancouver. The railway along the Bay replaced a line that went roughly where some now want to build this High Speed alignment. The book explains why that would be difficult.

The railway opened in March 1909 and made the superlative beaches of Semiahmoo Bay easily accessible. Soon scores of beach-goers arrived with almost every passing train. In response the communities of White Rock, Crescent Beach and Ocean Beach sprang up and prospered. But later the automobile usurped the passenger train and residents began to resent, even curse, the railway tracks on their door steps. No longer viewed as providing access to the beach, the tracks were seen as impeding access.

With the occasional death of a beach goer after being struck by a train, demands grew to get of the railway. No section of railway track of comparable length in British Columbia has generated such furious and sustained controversy.

It is a good read and I highly recommend it. The book also shows the importance of the New Westminster railway bridge replacement.

*Members should mail a cheque for \$45 made out to "National Railway Historical Society" and mail it to the author Barrie Sanford, Box 3088, Merritt, BC V1K 1B8. Ordering using the Society's Barry will send off the book, duly autographed, the day after receiving the order. If members want any special message in the book, then write that with the order.*

### CHINA'S GREAT TRAIN

BEIJING'S DRIVE WEST AND THE CAMPAIGN TO REMAKE TIBET

by: Abraham Lustgarten

Review by: Matthew Buchanan

This book is about the construction of the railway from Golmud in north west China across the Tibetan plateau to Lhasa the capital of Tibet. It isn't so much about the technical aspects of how they built the railway across the highest mountains and passes of the world, but about the politics of how the line was built and the affect that it had on the Tibetan people. This railway is now the highest in the world and had many technical challenges to overcome such as the crossing of a very large but fragile permafrost region and interviews many of the people involved in the planning and construction.

A lot of the book focuses on the central government's plan to bring the Tibet Autonomous Region into the fold of the rest of China. Tibet has long been isolated from the rest of the world due to it's harsh geography which limited easy road and railway construction. It is isolated by mountains on all sides.

It was quite sad to read about how the Tibetan people were promised great things by the Chinese government such as lower prices, easy access to the rest of China, and economic opportunity. Many of the Tibetans weren't opposed to the new railway, but were disappointed in the end results as they saw their own culture changing and traditional way or life marginalized. What it did instead was prompt a large migration of people and modern development, while most of the economic benefits went to the new Chinese immigrants leaving the Tibetans marginalized in their own land.

It was a fascinating but slightly sad book, well written and balanced with many viewpoints.

**Transport Action Prairie**  
 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
 Saturday May 8, Regina, SK  
 Knox-Metropolitan Church, 2340 Victoria Ave.  
 (corner of Lorne St.)

2 p.m. Annual Meeting  
 2:30 to 4:30  
 Speakers: to be announced...  
 THEMES

1. Update on the Last Mountain Railway
  2. Global Transportation Hub (near Regina)
- We hope that you can come. This is a chance to get to know each other, to share ideas and elect our Prairie executive. Please RSVP to Catherine at 569-7699 or [cv.transprairie@yahoo.ca](mailto:cv.transprairie@yahoo.ca)



*Clockwise from right: Gouda Leiden Tram, built in 2003 are for sale. Could they be used on Olympic Line? (From Modern Railways Mar, 2010)*

*New wayfinding signage at Waterfront Station. (M. Buchanan)*

*Bombardier Flexity Streetcar on the Olympic Line (M. Buchanan)*

**Transport Action British Columbia (Society)**  
 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
 Tuesday April 20, Vancouver BC  
 Firehall Library, 1455 West 10th Ave

18:00 (6PM) AGM  
 18:30 Regular Meeting

We hope that you can come to vote for your 2010 executive. Positions are: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Please RSVP to [bc@transport-action.ca](mailto:bc@transport-action.ca) or call Matthew at 604-761-6144



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“Transport Action represents the interests of consumers or users of public transport services in Canada and is involved with a variety of transport issues.”

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**Peter Lacey**, Editor  
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# Western Newsletter

## Transport Action Canada

*Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba & Saskatchewan*



In this Issue	
☼	Swiss Travel System
☼	Prairie AGM results
☼	Catherine's Editorial
☼	Winnipeg BRT Progress
☼	Poem: musing about trains
☼	STM and Ultra-Capicitor bus
☼	Grand Forks Omnitrax
☼	Website Update and Blog (BC)
☼	Cascadia rail
☼	Coal trucks on Vancouver Island
☼	Setback for Vancouver Island Rail
☼	Providing Timely Transit Schedules
☼	Book Review
☼	Next BC Meeting Sept 14th

### BEST TRANSPORT SYSTEM ON EARTH?

No, sorry it is not in Vancouver or British Columbia or anywhere else in Canada for that matter. I think it is possibly in Switzerland. They have built an efficient multi-modal transport system centred around the train, but integrated perfectly with buses and lake ferries. The system runs as they say "Like a Swiss watch" and they aren't exaggerating. The trains arrive on schedule almost all of the time and a delay of more than 2 minutes will be announced. It is truly a pleasure to travel in Switzerland so easily with no hassles. Travel between any two cities in Switzerland is possible every hour or half hour with easy connections between platforms at main hub stations like Geneva, Bern, Zurich and even smaller stations such as Speiz (near Interlaken).

A good way to visit Switzerland is with an 8 day (or less) Swiss Pass which allows unlimited travel with inter-city railways, buses, ferries, and urban transport systems of even smaller cities.

Comparing a country with a first-world transport system in a country like Switzerland or Germany, with the under-developed transport system of Canada is unfair. It is order of magnitudes better in Europe; however it is

good to know what is out there, so we can aspire to improve things at home.

*Matthew Buchanan.*

*P.S. Still looking for a new editor for the Western Newsletter. Sorry for the long delay with this issue.*

*Upper left: #17 Trolley bus leaving UBC for downtown Vancouver. (photo Ian Fisher) Lower right: VIA train #2 at Vancouver's Pacific Central, Aug 14, 2010. VIA has made some improvements to the plat-*



## PRAIRIE AGM RESULTS

Transport Action Prairie held a successful AGM on Saturday afternoon, May 8, 2010. Fifty people attended for the speakers : George Wooldridge on the Last Mountain Railway: a real success story, and Blair Wagar on the Global Transportation Hub outside Regina.

We were blessed by the attendance of our elders : George Burton from Humboldt, and Jim and Marjorie Richards from Melfort.

Because of our phoning campaign, as well as the media attention ( article by a Leader Post reporter that morning ) , we gained 5 new or long-lapsed members, promises of a few more, and 4 renewals, plus donations, and many contacts.

Transport Action Prairie established a working group Friends of the STC ( Saskatchewan Transportation bus Company). We hope to build a support network throughout Saskatchewan with promotion through the many community newspapers. Anyone willing to be part of the Friends Network, and help promote the STC, please contact Catherine Verrall 306-569-7699 or [cv.transprairie@yahoo.ca](mailto:cv.transprairie@yahoo.ca). In Regina, we have been distributing information by posters and email, about the STC program through May : Senior's Ride for \$10. anywhere in Saskatchewan.

Next comes the STC SUMMER YOUTH PASS \$40. a month, during June, July, August, for ages 12 to 25. Travel anywhere the STC goes in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Transportation Company, a crown corporation, serves 280 communities, with 29 bus routes.

*Catherine Verrall, Transport Action Prairie President.*



## CATHERINE'S EDITORIAL

The oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico shocks us at last to pay attention to the horrors our society brings on ourselves and our earth-life-support by our addiction to oil. Much of the toxic oil is used to support transportation. Each day we are bombarded by more bad news about the desperate state of our mutilated home, the Earth. We also hear about people all over the world, organizing to do something about it ... what Paul Hawken calls " Blessed Unrest". That is our primary mandate ... joining with others to strengthen sustainable, Life-respecting transportation. That is something important we can do.

Our new name challenges us to ACTION. Here is a check-list of possibilities:

### Education

- Educating ourselves
- Hosting displays at various community events ( about environment, civic planning, social justice, politics, community well-being, etc.) such as ecofairs in schools and colleges, social- and climate -justice events in churches, community festivals, etc. Hosting involves people who create the display, lug it to the location, stay with it to discuss with public. Contact Catherine [cv.transprairie.ca](http://cv.transprairie.ca) for suggestions.
- Writing letters to the editor, calling in to "talk" shows
- Contacting politicians

### Communication

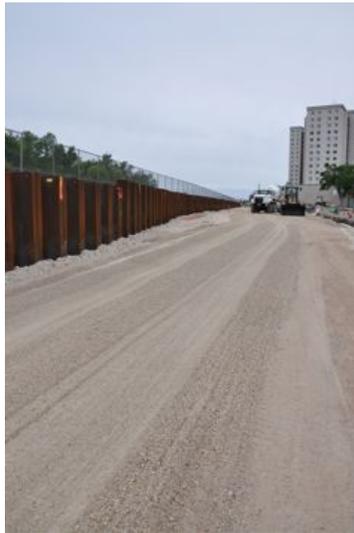
- Contacting current and lapsed members, by telephone, email, post.
- Use the revised Transport Action Prairie flyer ( if you are in the prairie region: a new national one should be available soon ) . Invite friends to join. Post in library, place of worship, etc.
- Write news items for our newsletters.
- Contribute high-tech skills... what can you do ?

### Local Action Groups

- Find a group doing action on a transport-related issue ( see "Displays" above ).. get involved
- Find a few ( 2 make a group!) Transport Action people to share concerns, ideas, ways to support a local transportation issue.
- Get names of local area members from the executive
- Life Style - take a hard look at our own lifestyles.. see what we can change, to lead by example.

## WINNIPEG BUSWAY PROGRESS

As I reported in the last issue of the newsletter, construction is proceeding on the first phase of the busway, from Main Street to Jubilee Avenue. All of the visible work is beside the CN mainline. The busway beside Donald St. as far as Osborne St. is well under way: the concrete roadbed is pretty well laid. However, there was no convenient site for photos. There is as yet no work started on the bridge across Osborne St. The approach to the tunnel under the CN mainline is also well under way, but again cannot be approached for photos. The photos shown here are taken along Stradbrook Ave., the northern end of the busway.



*Work on the portion of the line as it curves to the left beside Donald St.*

The second phase of the project (from Jubilee Avenue to the University of Manitoba) is rapidly becoming more and more confusing. First, the City still has no money allocated in its budget for this section. The Province and the Federal Government have earmarked \$126 million for this, but Mayor Katz wants them to divert the money to roads and bridges in the City. He is quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press (June 10) as saying that since the cost of Phase II has risen from \$189 million to \$220 million, that they should



*Showing the method of shoring up the embankment of the CN mainline,*

be providing \$146 million: they aren't so things are being held up. Further, he says the province is trying to force the city into building a busway when an LRT system would serve the city much better (well, that was what he wanted! The province agreed to the busway proposal and is naturally getting more and more annoyed at Katz for changing his mind). And Katz has had yet another revelation: he has, apparently very suddenly, become convinced that streetcars are the way to go, even better than his recently favoured LRT!

Once upon a time Winnipeg had streetcars, which were electrically powered and did very well. But internal combustion engines swept the stage in



*The northern end of the busway, where the southbound lane leaves Main St. At this point the northbound lane leaves the busway and crosses Stradbrook, to the left.*

the 1950's and 1960's and so we now have a bus system. One can't blame the people at the time for making the wrong choice,

because they'd have had to be looking

ahead 35 years or more, but it remains a pity that the decision was made, as now there would be no decisions to make and no vast sums of money needing to be spent. A streetcar system would work very well for the city, once more, once the enormous disruptions on the streets were forgotten. Katz is pointing out, also, that it would cost \$50 million per kilometre for the streetcar tracks and wires - "only" 30% more than the busway. But, understandably, the mayor has no credibility left on the issue, particularly as he is hoping that funding for a streetcar (or LRT) system would come from some other Federal source than the money already allocated.

*Photos by Blair Korchinski*

Local busmaker New Flyer has weighed in with a comment (Free Press, June 10) that buses on a

busway are the best solution; their newest buses, a spokesman says, do not match the public perception of buses as dirty, noisy and smelly; the first advantage the company cites is that the new buses have Wi-Fi! They are also more fuel-efficient, with more area of natural light and better handicapped access. Their showcase is the City of Cleveland.

It is difficult to see how this is all going to play out. Most likely the busway Phase II will be completed and then investigations will begin into the feasibility of converting the ways to LRT.

It may be coincidence or a sneaky editorial comment - but above the story in the Free Press appears a picture of 24 turtles sunning themselves beside a river near Brandon!

*Peter Lacey - Manitoba*

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### **musings about trains**

trains chugged and whistled through my life  
topped with dusty men looking for work  
filled with soldiers headed for war  
me cocooned in a clicking berth peeking  
at little town platforms streaks of light in the dusk  
or speeding along north of lake superior  
watching a moose swim a spruce bordered lake  
but these days i must take a bus quite a distance  
to board a train i can ride

*by: June Mitchell*

## **THE STM AND THE ULTRA CAPACITOR BUS.**

On May 21, 2010, the Société Transport de Montréal (STM) announced its plans to convert all its bus fleet to electric power by 2025 [4]. Some busy routes could be converted to trolley-buses, but the bulk of the conversion is expected to be done by adopting battery (ultra capacitor) powered electric buses.

The well-known weaknesses of any electric vehicle are the trip-length capacity of the battery and the length of time it takes to charge it. Trip-length capacity need not be a major problem for a bus if it can be recharged very quickly at a bus station.

Such could be achieved by using fast-charging batteries, typically relying on ultra capacitor technology. Incidentally, a Proterra bus using this technology was demonstrated to the BC Transit Authority in Victoria on April 11 ([www.proterraonline.com](http://www.proterraonline.com)) [1][4]. Fast-charging batteries (from less than one minute to 10 minutes) usually provide little trip-length capacity, but it may well be good enough for most urban bus usage, which involves very predictable routes and inherent layover time at stops, making it simpler to decide where to site charging stations along the routes.

Nevertheless, the technology, though looking promising in concept, is still in its infancy. The most notable demonstration project has been deployed in Shanghai in China [2], and one is planned in France: the choice there is to recharge the bus battery in ten seconds or so, giving a trip-length capacity of one kilometer [5]. The French project description highlights the simplicity of the technology, most noticeably in comparison with hydrogen systems. Electric buses are, after all, nothing much more than trolley-buses with a battery; the charging stations can be supplied by a regular electric line, which would keep an on-site capacitor ready for the next bus. It is claimed that the investment could be amortized in as little as twelve years.

In regard to the current state of the technology, the STM announcement seems a bit too bold but it shows a healthy renewed interest in electric buses (which seems also to be favourable to trolley-bus development).

*Patrick Rault - Vancouver*

Notes:

[1] For some reason, Proterra buses have been equipped of a auxiliary hydrogen generator, but the main feature of the bus is the fast charging battery.

[2] Next Stop: Ultracapacitor Buses, Technology review, October 19, 2009  
<http://www.technologyreview.com/energy/23754/>

[3] Transit tests out hybrid bus, March 12, 2010, Times Colonist,  
<http://www.timescolonist.com/technology/Transit+ests+hybrid/2674539/story.html>

[4] STM bus fleet to be fully electric by 2025, The Gazette, May 22, 2010.  
<http://www.montrealgazette.com/fleet+fully+electric+2025/3059065/story.html>

[5] Wireless Alternative Trolley Technology (french)  
[http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/IMG/spipwwwmedad/pdf/12\\_Fiche\\_Watt\\_cle5794b3.pdf](http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/IMG/spipwwwmedad/pdf/12_Fiche_Watt_cle5794b3.pdf)



*Glacier Express at Chur Switzerland June 2010  
 (M. Buchanan)*

## GRAND FORKS RAILWAY

Officials in Grand Forks BC (Near the BC-Washington border) are concerned about the potential abandonment of the former BNSF rail line from Kettle Falls, WA to Danville BC. The line is actively used by industry in the Boundary Region. Last word was that the current owners of the line were planning to abandon the line in June. In a Grand Forks Gazette article on Aug 18, the City of Grand Forks is spending \$70,000 for a study to try save the railway.

## WEBSITE UPDATE AND BLOG

For the latest information on transportation and more information on the stories in this issue please go to our web site and blog. Both are accessible by pointing your browser to:

<http://bc.transport-action.ca/>

*By M. Buchanan.*

## BC-WASHINGTON HIGH SPEED RAIL

The latest news on the Amtrak Cascades train service between Vancouver, Seattle and Portland is that ridership continues to grow. According the Washington State department of Transportation, ridership is up 12% in the second quarter of 2010 compared to the same quarter last year. They expect 2010 to be the best year ever.

Canadian Border Services Agency is still a wild card in plans to increase service from 2 trains per day to four, which is in Amtrak and WSDOT's long range plan for Cascades. They haven't given up on plans to charge Amtrak \$1500 per day for their services.

BC seems to be happy with the 2nd train but is still showing little interest in investing any money in the service or any of the much needed infrastructure improvements such as the New Westminster rail bridge, or track improvements and sidings in Burnaby, New Westminster, Surrey, and Delta.

*By M. Buchanan.*

## COAL TRUCK B-LINE

Transport Action BC response to: "Coal Clouds a Green Future", Georgia Straight, April 22 2010, Page 17

This article raises many important environmental considerations that must be addressed to determine if the proposed Comox Valley coal mine proposal should proceed.

However, it only briefly mentions the plan to truck 2,000,000 tonnes of coal to Port Alberni each year. Transport Action BC calculates that moving this much coal will generate 200 to 340 daily truck trips and the equivalent number of empty returns. These trucks would be coming every 4 - 7 minutes, 24 hours a day, as frequently as buses on Vancouver's 99 B-line in the rush hour.

This truck traffic surge will cause major increases in wear-and-tear on the roadways; there are reports that a single truck causes the same road damage as tens of thousands of cars. There is also a potential increase in highway collisions resulting in higher policing, emergency services and health care costs. Additionally, a truck-based solution is inefficient and wasteful; the Washington State Energy Office estimates that moving freight by rail is 3 times as energy-efficient as the same movement by trucks. And of course greenhouse gas emissions and particulate matter from diesel exhaust and tire and brake wear will be continuously dumped into the atmosphere.

There is, however, a more sustainable alternative to trucking the coal. An underutilised rail line parallels much of the proposed route. A partnership of the rail line's owners, Compliance Energy Corp., other Island stakeholders and various levels of government could refurbish the line. One or two daily trains could replace the hundreds of daily truck trips, avoiding many of the economic and environmental costs of a road-based solution.

A rail-based solution must be considered as part of the various impact assessments of the proposed coal mining project.

*By Frederick Jelfs*

*(This letter was submitted to the Georgia Straight, but not published)*

## VANCOUVER ISLAND RAILWAY

A provincial study on the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway on Vancouver Island was released recently. The bottom line is that the province doesn't feel that the railway is worth upgrading.

The province has no problem dropping \$24 million on new interchanges (eg. McTavish Rd in North Saanich) with no year long half million dollar studies, but won't spend a dime on actually improving rail service.

Official Study:

[http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/publications/reports\\_and\\_studies/Evaluation\\_ENRailway/publications.htm](http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/publications/reports_and_studies/Evaluation_ENRailway/publications.htm)

Transport Action BC will have more on this topic in the next issue.

## PROVIDING TIMELY SCHEDULE TO TRANSIT PASSENGERS

I'm just back from a month in Europe, with two weeks spent in Berlin. As many of you who have travelled there know, that City has a splendid public transportation system. A one week pass costing €26.5 was excellent value, and a similar length pass in our cities would encourage tourists to use the transit system.



The one feature that impressed me most was the proliferation of GPS transit readograph signs everywhere. The U-bahn and most buses and tram

lines had these at each stop (or at least each major stop for the buses), so you always had a pretty good idea how long you'd need to wait for the next one. Hopefully, Translink and BC Transit will be working

towards an extensive network of these transit-friendly devices.

*Jim Ramsay - Vancouver*

Another viewpoint:

All that is needed is to propagate the information to people's work/home computers, cell phones (text) and smart phones. No infrastructure cost to TransLink. All they have to do is make the information available! See what they've done in Portland: <http://trimet.org/arrivals/index.htm>

I would rather stay in my office or in the cafe and get emailed when the next bus is 4 minutes away (real time not scheduled) than have to walk out to the bus stop to find out. This would eliminate all frustrating waits at the bus stop (unless the bus is full).

TransLink already sends out schedule information (text bus and mobile website), now simply share the GPS (real position) information. I understand that all the CM buses have GPS now. We are so close to having this system... why is it taking so long? I'm sure this would convert a lot of potential riders in my high tech office park.

*Andrew Feltham - Vancouver.*

## KUDOS

To Vancouver major Gregor Robertson and city councillor Geoff Meggs for attending the passenger rail workshops put on by the Cascadia institute in Vancouver. It is good to see some politicians pay attention to inter-city passenger rail.

*By M. Buchanan.*

## NEXT TRANSPORT ACTION BC MEETING

Tuesday September 14, 2010  
 Firehall Library at 10th Ave and Granville St  
 Vancouver, BC  
 6:00 PM to 7:45 PM

## BOOK REVIEW

### WAITING ON A TRAIN

The Embattled Future of Passenger Rail Service

A Year Spent Riding Across America

by: James McCommons

Review by Matthew Buchanan

This book covers a journalist's voyage across most of the USA over a year or so long period on Amtrak trains. The author is not a rail fan, but a long time Amtrak customer who during the course of his travels interviews many other passengers, Amtrak officials, freight rail officials,

The book provides an overview of the different types of trains, the varying quality of trains in different parts of the country and the many problems facing Amtrak such as long delays caused by freight trains, unfriendly employees, old equipment, unreliable timekeeping, not enough equipment, not enough frequency, etc.

Success stories such as the State of California's investment in three inter-city corridors, cooperative freight railroads such as BNSF, are compared with state transportation departments showing little interest in trains, and passenger hostile freight railroads such as Union Pacific.

Many comparisons can be made to Canada's VIA Rail and the lack of interest all Canadian province's Ministries of Transportations are towards any interest in passenger rail.



*Intermodal station for long distance and commuter trains, up the stairs is the tram platform. Freiburg Germany. (photo M. Buchanan, Jun 2010)*



*Clockwise from top left:*

- *Sudostbahn Class 526 (Stadler FLIRT) operating ZW route S13 at Wadenswil Switzerland (Sept 2008).*
- *SkyTrain crossing the Fraser River at New Westminster and Surrey, 2010.*
- *New Mark II SkyTrain cars near Science World in Vancouver, 2010.*
- *Canada Line trains passing on Sea Island near Vancouver International Airport, 2010.*

*All photos by Ian Fisher.*

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“Transport Action represents the interests of consumers or users of public transport services in Canada and is involved with a variety of transport issues.”

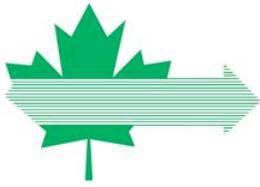
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# Western Newsletter

## Transport Action Canada

*Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba & Saskatchewan*

### In This Issue

- Catherine Verrall comments on Regina's new Distribution Centre
- Large Manitoba projects: pros and cons
- Churchill update: The Hudson's Bay Company's latter-day replacement.
- An update on the circumstances of this newsletter

### Catherine Verrall comments on Regina's new Distribution Centre

*(Excerpted with permission from Regina's "Prairie Dog" on-line magazine's Nov. 23, 2010 issue: the article by Gregory Beatty is entitled "Transport Hubbub". Catherine's comments follow the article, below).*

"Global Transportation Hub": it has quite the impressive ring to it. Much better than "intermodal cargo facility" which is technically what's being built out west of the Regina International Airport.

And why shouldn't we go with the grander title? Aspire to be that hub for global transportation? We're centrally located in the supply chain of manufactured goods from Asia that get shipped to ports like Prince Rupert and Vancouver, then are off-loaded onto rail to be delivered to major population centres in central and eastern North

America. We have solid road and rail infrastructure that we are investing in heavily to upgrade. And we also have a growing economy with significant export capacity. So maybe the idea of Regina being at the centre of the globalization action isn't as crazy as it first seems.

At present, Canadian Pacific Railway's operation in Regina, our biggest "link" in the aforementioned supply chain, is situated on a 20-acre patch of land downtown between Saskatchewan Drive and Dewdney Avenue. But, when operational, CP's new facility, which is being built on land annexed from the RM of Sherwood in 2008, will be 300 acres.

Already committed to the GTH is Loblaws (i.e. Superstore, Extra Foods) which is establishing a one million sq. ft. distribution centre there. It will service all of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and parts of B.C. – fully one-tenth of Loblaws' national distribution capacity.

At an early May forum hosted by Transport Action Prairie, a local group devoted to sustainable transportation, GTH CEO Blair Wagar recounted the history of the hub and what its potential economic benefits could be.

It was the former NDP government that green-lit the project, he said. The CP main line that runs through Regina won't be moved, but the site where the trains arrive, and where containers are off-loaded onto trucks for delivery in Regina's local distribution network,



will shift to the GTH. According to Wagar, CP has outgrown its current facility, but there is no room to expand nearby.

At the GTH it will have 15 times the space. To service Loblaws, CP will need it too. Loblaws has both a fresh-frozen and manufactured goods component to its operation, said Wagar. The former is mostly trucked up from California, while the latter is shipped in from Asia on rail.

When Loblaws' distribution centre is operational, it will employ 1,000-1,200 people. Trucking companies and other ancillary businesses anxious to serve Loblaws will also set up shop here.

Those aren't the only economic benefits the GTH will provide, said Wagar. "It [will also capture] containers for Saskatchewan shippers. There are a lot of manufacturers here, but there's not a lot of containers that come to Saskatchewan to get unloaded versus the amount of goods that we have to ship out."

"The GTH offers us the opportunity to gather our manufactured goods, get them onto the global supply chain, and move stuff out to other global markets," said Wagar.

"At the end of the day, that's why the province is mostly interested in this."

To make the GTH happen, the municipal, provincial and federal governments have all committed money. During his talk, Wagar emphasized that the public funding was limited to infrastructure like roads, water and sewer. Actual facilities like warehouses and rail lines are being paid for by the companies themselves.

The public infrastructure commitment isn't limited to the GTH site. At peak capacity, an estimated 1,400 heavy trucks a week will deliver goods to and from the GTH. To avoid congestion, a new bypass is being built at the

junction of Hwy #1 and Lewvan Drive in southwest Regina. Upgrades to Pinkie Road are also underway to improve the connection between Hwys #1 and 11, and a new bypass will also be needed in southeast Regina to route traffic around the city on Hwy #1. As well, improvements are needed to the North Portal highway to facilitate north-south traffic, with Estevan possibly getting its own bypass".

So yes, the GTH is definitely ambitious. But is it sustainable? That's a concern that Transport Action Prairie president **Catherine Verrall** had after Wagar's presentation.

"I wouldn't say our organization is totally against this," she added. "But we do have concerns. There's a book out by Jeff Rubin called Your World is About to Get a Whole Lot Smaller. I really wonder how long our dependence on goods transported over great distances can support the hub idea."

In his book Rubin argues that, until now, the shift that's occurred over the last 40 years to global manufacturing and distribution networks has been fueled by a steady supply of cheap oil ruthlessly extracted without regard for the environmental consequences.

As supply dwindles, the price will inevitably climb, and transportation costs will start to become prohibitive.

"It's going to be that China won't be able to send its goods all over the world," said Verrall. "The same thing will happen here. We're going to have to grow our own vegetables and make do with what we can get closer at hand or do without."

"I don't think people are taking seriously the fact that these changes are coming, and that they're coming a lot faster than we expect," she concluded.



## Large Manitoba projects: pros and cons

There are a number of important projects under way in Manitoba these days. Looking at them dispassionately, it's both impressive and depressing to see the wealth of innovative, practical ideas there are on the one hand, and the paltry results on the other, due to lack of vision and initiative (or, to be charitable, to the best efforts of the politicians involved to select the least unpopular option!)

To its credit, the Manitoba government has bought into a few of the good ideas. The siting of the new Bipole III power transmission line on the west side of Lake Winnipeg is one; the continuing support of Churchill as a northern port is another.

In recent days, Premier Selinger of Manitoba has been meeting with stakeholders and interested parties, including international interests, on the subject of making more use of Churchill as the northernmost entry/exit point for traffic bound through Centreport, the air/rail/road hub being developed in Winnipeg.

I've opined before that the idea of Winnipeg being a continent-wide despatching point is pretty well a non-starter: there is no way air freight will stop at Winnipeg (except for fuel) to be sent on to other centres (or vice-versa); the load limit on even the largest air freighter makes rail/air interchange unfeasible; the only practical part of the idea is container interchange between trucks and the railways.

This, along with the associated business park which will develop is really what Centreport is all about; but unless someone ponies up a great deal of money, neither CP or CN is likely to move their container yards across the city.

That being said, there is merit in continuing to support Churchill as a viable port: especially if the amount of import traffic can be increased. (In

view of this, it's interesting that the province is still involved in the road-to-Nunavut project; as this will start at Gillam - presently the roadhead - and go first to Churchill, it will seriously cut into the amount of non-grain traffic that the railway carries to Churchill).

The Premier is trying to get on board with the prospect of vast amounts of new traffic moving through the Arctic due to global warming. However, sadly, such traffic may be a chimera as far as Churchill is concerned.

Traffic coming from the east already happens and will increase with global warming. But traffic from the west seems much more questionable. A glance at the map shows that there are two routes.

The first is McClure Strait / Viscount Melville Sound / Lancaster Sound and so north of Baffin Island to Hudson Strait. However, this comes out so far east that (on the map at least) there doesn't seem to be much difference between the run to Churchill or to the maritime provinces (or possibly to Quebec city): the ultimate destination of the loads will probably be the deciding factor.

The other route, to Lancaster Sound but turning south around Somerset Island, would be much shorter (to get to Churchill) but would have to go through Fury & Hecla Strait, which is very narrow and subject to ferocious tides and ice conditions.

(The southernmost route, hugging the coast, is too complicated and runs through far too many treacherous areas for any but local traffic). It is debatable at this point as to which is the better route from shipping's point of view.

And if that weren't enough, there's a competing proposal, although as presently described it doesn't include a railway. That's the Bathurst Inlet deep-sea port and all-weather road, commissioned by the Kitikmeot Corporation. The port will be able to handle 50,000-ton



freighters and will be reasonably close to high-seas navigation, although the last hundred miles or so will mean careful navigation through the island-studded Coronation Gulf. The connecting land route would eventually go through Yellowknife. The proposal is still under study but it's a definite possibility.

But Premier Selinger is to be commended for his efforts.

The Bipole III project - a second major power transmission line from Gillam to Winnipeg - could go either east of Lake Winnipeg or west of it, in this case paralleling, at some distance, the present line.

The government has decided to use the western route although this will cost substantially more. This is to preserve the status of the east side of Lake Winnipeg as a world heritage area; a worthy concept but opposes the idea of the native groups there gaining any economic advantage, as well as keeping them isolated (as: no transmission line - no road to service it - no access, in or out, for the natives).

At this stage the whole argument is somewhat up in the air: if there should be a change of government in the next election, due next year, it's possible that the east-side route will be used after all.

But here a most intriguing alternative best-of-both-worlds proposal seems to have been allowed to die quietly. Dr. John Ryan, a retired University of Winnipeg geography professor, did the research and development for the idea of running the cable under Lake Winnipeg - from Warren Landing to Traverse Bay, a distance of 350 kilometres, almost the entire length of Lake Manitoba.

Traverse Bay is across the lake (on the east side) from Gimli, which is where the railway ends and the actual cable-laying would start from: ships

equipped to haul and lay the cable would pull it from a train of flatcars, with the cable laid end-to-end along the whole train, which would gradually move forward or backwards to make sure the cable always comes off the train at the same spot.

A very clever idea and one that's been undertaken successfully elsewhere in the world! Dr. Ryan presents studies and figures which demonstrate that the project is eminently feasible and could deliver serious cost reductions.

The reports are available at:

[http://energymanitoba.org/exp-imp\\_trans\\_b3.htm](http://energymanitoba.org/exp-imp_trans_b3.htm)

But, as said, the proposal seems to be languishing.

A pity!

Finally, there's the road to Nunavut. It is unquestionable that easier access to remote northern communities is very greatly needed. Transportation costs - via air or the winter roads - are crippling large. Medical evacuation is difficult and expensive - one doesn't need to go into many details to get the point.

The road to Nunavut has been in prospect for several years now. When first mooted it was expected to cost over \$1.5 billion for construction and \$12 or more million in annual maintenance. Of course, it wouldn't serve every isolated community but could be routed to cut down the distance from the road to each.

The obvious negative aspects of this are three: maintenance will be ongoing and difficult, and due to the fact that much of the roadbed is on muskeg it will get worse; there will have to be emergency service points at frequent intervals, due to the sparsely settled nature of the country; and there will never be much traffic on the road, again due to the low population.



Certainly such an expensive road system would never be built in areas with better geography but such a low population.

Still, something must be done. I do not recall having seen a proposal to extend the railway north of Churchill, which should at least be considered, since the proposed route runs along the coast. Apart from that, there is the possibility of - airships!

The US Department of Defence recently signed a \$157 million contract to build three large airships, initially for use in surveillance in war areas. They will have lift systems which combine static (the helium that floats the ship) and aerodynamic (using wings of some sort) functions.

These will be able to carry truckloads of goods to remote places, and will have sufficient capacity to carry useful loads of mineral concentrates. These could be based at Churchill, with all the obvious advantages.

An important new industry - building and running airships - could make Manitoba famous! (And, the Hindenburg tragedy notwithstanding, the airships are safe: today they use helium instead of hydrogen, which greatly reduces the danger from fire).

Airships would not be able to operate in all weather, but at the beginning of the 20th century they were in use for trans-Atlantic passenger flights, with all the weather conditions that occur there; and a blizzard that would ground an airship would most certainly keep vehicles off the road.

It's obvious that such a flexible, unlimited-operating-range vehicle must be taken seriously. It remains to be seen if it will.

We live in interesting times!

*Peter Lacey*

## **Churchill update: The Hudson's Bay Company's latter-day replacement**

About 20% of the Port of Churchill's traffic comes from barging shipments of food and other supplies north from Churchill to Rankin Inlet and other Nunavut communities on the western shore of Hudson Bay.

Materials could soon be heading to residents of the Kivalliq region of Nunavut with enhanced speed and reliability, as OmniTRAX Canada Inc., owner of the port, and Braden-Burry Expediting, based in Yellowknife, have begun searching for a marine carrier to provide additional services out of Churchill.

"An all-inclusive freight rate from Winnipeg to the communities on the western shore of Hudson Bay has been extremely popular, but the customers approached a more active role in the management of the marine services in Churchill," said Gary Long, president and CEO of OmniTRAX Canada.

"We look forward to the earlier departures of the re-supply system from Churchill so we may start our construction season much earlier than we've been able to the past few years," said John Hickey, mayor of Rankin Inlet, the most populous community in the Kivalliq region.

"Integrated pricing and the seamless transfer of goods will certainly improve our re-supply needs."

*(From the "Nickel Belt News" section of the Thompson, MB, "Citizen", November 26, 2010)*



**The Transport Action Western Newsletter is in urgent need of news-gatherers and contact persons for both Alberta and British Columbia. Please consider helping out in these roles (or indeed any others).**

*Season's Greetings to all!*

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#### **Western Newsletter:**

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### **An update on the circumstances of this newsletter**

Members of Transport Action are supposed to receive 4 issues of the newsletter each year. Until a couple of months ago, Matthew Buchanan and I shared to creation of the newsletter: he and I both wrote and collected news, and he did the actual layout. But Matthew began to find that other commitments were taking up more and more of his time, to the point where he just couldn't devote enough attention to the job, or to get it out in a timely fashion. Which is a pity, as he is a good writer and laid out a classy publication.

So I composed this issue; as I don't have the proper software I couldn't do as good a job. So: apologies! And anyone that has good page layout software, please consider doing the layout for us!

*Peter Lacey, Editor*

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Transport Action is a volunteer group representing the interests of consumers or users of public transport services in Canada and is involved with a variety of transport issues.