

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - Ellwood subdivision

20/04/1993 Ottawa Citizen Ellwood

COMMUTER RAIL LINK MENTIONED FOR OTTAWA-HULL REGION: CP Rail System has announced that it is considering whether its Ellwood Subdivision can be used as the basis for a commuter rail link between Hull, Quebec, and Ottawa, Ontario. A key element of this approach is the company's "Prince of Wales Bridge" which carries the Ellwood Sub. across the Ottawa River.

The announcement came after a flurry of public opposition on the Ontario side to Quebec proposals that a new automobile bridge be built across the Ottawa River in order to ease rush hour congestion - primarily from Quebec traffic heading to Ottawa. Regardless of where the bridge was to be located, it would have a major impact on local neighbourhoods and the public outcry was so great that municipal officials in Ontario distanced themselves very quickly from any such project.

So far, CP isn't making any firm commitments as to what action will arise from the study. The announcement was warmly received in Ottawa, however. (Branchline).

09/12/1993 Ottawa Citizen Ellwood Ottawa

COMMUTER RAIL PLAN PRESENTED TO OTTAWA-CARLETON REGIONAL COUNCIL: As reported in the December issue of Branchline, CP Rail formally presented its proposal for commuter rail service in the National Capital Region to the Ottawa-Carleton Regional Council on December 8. Raymond O'Meara, CP's director general of commuter rail service, said that a service could be up and running in as little as 18 months, pending its approval by the various levels of government at the municipal and provincial levels. Equipment for a pilot project would cost about \$10 million with O'Meara recommending the purchase of used cars and locomotives for a total of three trainsets. O'Meara also recommended the establishment of five stations on the Ontario side including the Confederation Heights, Hunt Club, Leitrim Road, Carleton University and Lebreton Flats, along with the existing Ottawa Station. Stations in Quebec would be located in Hull, Gatineau and, possibly, the Gatineau Airport.

Although Council was non-committal, Regional Chair Peter Clark said, "I am intrigued by the possibilities and if we can make economic sense out of it, we should do it... It will be a cheaper option than building transitways." (Branchline)

23/03/1994 Le Droit Ellwood

TRANSIT OFFICIAL IS SCEPTICAL ABOUT PROPOSED COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE: The Chairperson of the Outaouais transport commission (Societe des transports de l'Outaouais) has injected a strong note of caution into a CP Rail System proposal to establish a commuter rail service in the Ottawa/Hull region. Said Antoine Gregoire, "It's much too soon to be talking about a commuter train. There are too many questions still to be answered before starting to promote it." Gregoire said that the results of a transit options study examining commuter rail, amongst other things, won't be available until some time in the summer. (Branchline)

06/12/1994 Ottawa Sun Ellwood

INITIAL ESTIMATES FOR COST OF COMMUTER RAIL IN NATIONAL CAPITAL: It will cost at least \$90 million to establish an inter-provincial commuter rail system in the National Capital Region. So said a consultant's report on the costs of developing a commuter rail option as opposed to new inter-provincial road links. The system would use existing CP Rail System trackage as well as see the re-construction of a portion of the now-abandoned Waltham Subdivision between Hull and Aylmer, Quebec. Annual operating costs are estimated to be at \$16 million, with the system carrying at least 8,000 passengers per day. The costs are higher than anticipated but still below the cost of new road links according to Transport 2000 president David Glastonbury. "It looks like a solution to the traffic problem that costs a lot less money than more linkages and roads," said Glastonbury. New roads and bridges carry at least a \$350 million price tag, not to mention the associated environmental consequences. (branchline)

02/03/1995 Ottawa Citizen Ellwood

OTTAWA-CARLETON CONTINUES TO ENDORSE COMMUTER

RAIL: The Transportation Committee of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton continues to endorse a CP Rail proposal to set up a commuter rail operation in the national capital. The project, linking Gatineau, Quebec, with the Ottawa International Airport, has yet to receive endorsement from either the Ontario or Quebec governments. (Branchline)

31/03/1995 Le Droit Ellwood

COMMUTER RAIL NIXED IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION: The

Outaouais Regional Council has nixed a proposal by CP Rail System to operate a commuter rail system in the National Capital Region. Although the idea had been endorsed by Ontario municipalities, it was not as well received in Quebec. Transport critics have decried the decision, blaming it on a short-sighted government obsessed with building a new automobile bridge across the Ottawa River. CP Rail System had proposed a route using the Lachute, Ellwood and Prescott Subdivisions, with the possibility of rebuilding part of the Waltham Subdivision to link in the City of Aylmer, Quebec. (Branchline)

The City of Ottawa must restore the Prince of Wales Bridge and the railway that approaches it in the next 12 months or formally discontinue the operations, a regulator has ruled.

Knowing it's virtually impossible to find resources to do such work in short order, the city is considering seeking a court review of the decision released by the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) on Friday.

The agency told the city to either restore the bridge and railway or start the process to officially discontinue operating the federally regulated railway line in that area. The CTA is giving the city until April 30 to choose an option.

City clerk and solicitor Rick O'Connor told council members late Friday afternoon that the legal department, transportation department and external rail experts will review the decision.

"That review is intended to inform a recommendation as to the next steps to be taken in this matter, which may include a request for judicial review," O'Connor told council.

This all started with a complaint to the CTA by the Moose Consortium in 2016 alleging that the city didn't follow the proper process to remove tracks between Bayview station and the Prince of Wales Bridge.

The city has an ongoing construction zone at Bayview station to build the Confederation Line LRT, requiring the removal of existing tracks.

Other rail companies could get access to a discontinued rail line if the owner has stopped operating the tracks.

Moose (Mobility Ottawa- Outaouais: Systems and Enterprises) wants to build a regional train service funded by the private sector and it has eyed the Prince of Wales Bridge as the connection point to western Quebec.

The city owns the bridge, which is completely closed to all uses, and hasn't used the railway that runs north of Bayview station. The O-Train Trillium Line stops at Bayview station, which is the northern terminus of the service.

The decision on Friday caps several months of back and forth between the city and the CTA over this complaint. The city told the CTA last September that it would take about two years to realign the tracks and three years to restore the bridge.

The CTA told the city the timelines weren't reasonable. The city then told the CTA that the agency was exceeding its jurisdiction.

The city intends to use the bridge to link its rail service with the Gatineau transit system, but not in the foreseeable future.

Regulator sparks questions about future of Prince of Wales Bridge

Transportation agency orders city to restore rail line leading to blocked-off bridge

A decision by the Canadian Transportation Agency is sparking questions about the future of the abandoned Prince of Wales Bridge, with some in Ottawa hoping to see it back in operation much sooner than expected.

In a ruling issued Friday, the agency gave the City of Ottawa two options.

It can either try to sell a portion of the rail line leading to the Prince of Wales Bridge, which spans the Ottawa River just west of the city's downtown - which could lead to it being permanently closed if there are no buyers.

Or it can instead restore the tracks - including those that run over the bridge - so they can accommodate rail traffic within 12 months

"Faced with the potential to have to demolish the bridge or discontinue that rail line, I think most residents of Ottawa feel that it would be far preferable to put the bridge into service," said Kitchissippi Coun. Jeff Leiper, whose ward's eastern border is the bridge and O-Train tracks.

"It should put a bit of a fire under city council as well as our federal and provincial partners to find a way to fund it."

The agency made its decision in response to a complaint filed in 2016 by Moose Consortium Inc., a group hoping to rehabilitate the bridge as part of its plan to offer regional rail services to outlying communities in Quebec and Ontario.

The consortium filed its complaint after the City of Ottawa ripped up a quarter-kilometre section of rail tracks just south of the bridge in order to build a new entrance to the Bayview LRT station.

In its decision, the CTA said the city didn't follow the rules that govern the discontinuance of rail lines.

As a result, the city now has until the end of April to report back to the CTA about what it plans to do now.

Costly rehabilitation work

"I don't think council is anywhere near being able to make that decision today," Leiper told CBC News.

With the city's own repair estimates out of date, Leiper said it's difficult to say how much it would cost to rehabilitate the bridge, adding it could be anywhere between tens and hundreds of millions of dollars.

Kitchissippi Coun. Jeff Leiper says he hopes the city can find a way to rehabilitate the Prince of Wales Bridge to allow for rail, pedestrian and bicycle traffic. (Andrew Foote/CBC)

In a memo to councillors, City of Ottawa solicitor Rick O'Connor said the city's legal team is reviewing its options, which could include seeking judicial review.

That's an option Leiper said he would support, as it would buy the city more time to make an informed decision.

Mayor Jim Watson said the city will consult with lawyers and may consider appealing the ruling.

"I don't think it's reasonable for a federal agency to tell us to keep a bridge operational for rail when we don't have the funds to put rail across to Quebec at this point," he said.

Best case scenario

Still, Leiper said most people in Ottawa would welcome a functioning rail bridge linking Ottawa and Gatineau, helping to ease congestion and benefiting the environment.

"Everything points to the importance of keeping the bridge and getting it back in service," he said.

Though Ottawa and Gatineau have long hoped to connect their transit systems by rail, there are still no concrete plans to achieve that goal. (Mathieu Fleury/Twitter)

The City of Ottawa has envisioned converting the abandoned bridge to light rail so it could connect with Gatineau's transit system, but there is no concrete plan or funding in place to achieve that goal.

"What the Canadian Transportation Agency's decision forces us to do is make some plans around that sooner than we might have thought," Leiper said.

Potential for local, regional service

Hull-Aylmer MP Greg Fergus welcomed the CTA's decision, which he said leaves the door open not only to local rail service over the bridge but also the regional service proposed by Moose Consortium Inc.

"The more players that are in there, the better," Fergus said.

"I really do believe rail is the future for being able to move people efficiently, quickly and cheaply, so this is good news all around."

Fergus has also voiced his support for a tramway connecting Aylmer to downtown Gatineau with a potential link over the Prince of Wales Bridge.

Joseph Potvin, director general of Moose Consortium Inc., said he wasn't surprised by the agency's decision and hopes it will accelerate plans to rehabilitate the bridge.

"There's only one way to get between the O-Train line and the Quebec side — which is along the [bridge's] tracks," he said.

Moose Consortium Inc. has submitted plans for a bypass line around Bayview Station, after the City of Ottawa ripped up unused rail tracks as part of LRT construction. (Giacomo Panico/CBC)

Potvin said his team recently submitted proposals to the City of Ottawa and the CTA for the bridge's rehabilitation, including plans for a bypass track around Bayview Station.

The plan also includes seismic upgrades to the bridge as well as cantilevered bike and pedestrian paths.

"There isn't a conflict with the two systems," Potvin said. "It would actually be entirely complementary."

Potvin said the rehabilitation of the bridge would cost \$50 million, which the consortium proposes to finance in full.

His team has pegged the cost of bypassing Bayview Station at an additional \$25 million.

In the meantime, all eyes remain on the City of Ottawa as it weighs its options in response to the agency's ruling.

City to appeal agency's order to replace ripped-up rail

Mayor Jim Watson asking transport minister to intercede in squabble with federal agency.

The City of Ottawa is appealing a federal agency's order to restore, sell or scrap a portion of rail line near the Prince of Wales Bridge, and the mayor is asking a federal minister to step in.

As part of light rail construction, the city removed a section of the line north of Bayview Station.

The Canadian Transportation Agency's (CTA) mid-February decision would force the city to either put the line up for sale, which could lead to its permanent closure if no buyers come forth, or restore it to a state where it could be re-opened to rail traffic within 12 months.

Given until the end of April to respond, city officials had said they would likely appeal the decision, which they saw as the agency going too far.

In a memo Tuesday, Mayor Jim Watson said the city has started filing an appeal with the Federal Court of Appeal. If approved, that appeal process could take a year or two.

Watson told reporters later that day he doesn't think the agency's decision is fair.

"We have every intention of using that bridge " we believe it's in [our] best interest that we don't go spend money now when we're not ready for that service to go," he said.

"We want to get service to Kanata as Phase 3A [of the light rail network], as I call it, then Phase 3B would be to Gatineau."

Request to cabinet

Watson also said he's written to federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau to request a review under Section 40 of the Canada Transportation Act, which gives the federal cabinet the power to change or throw out an agency ruling.

"You can certainly appreciate the City's surprise and disappointment in being asked to make this unfortunate 'either or' determination at this point in time,"

Watson wrote in the letter, which was attached to Tuesday's memo.

"Particularly, it appears that the CTA has rendered its decision without taking into account the ongoing discussions between the cities of Gatineau and Ottawa, as well as with local Members of Parliament, with respect to the future potential use of the [bridge] in connecting our two transit systems."

Watson wrote it would take two to three years to get the bridge ready, rather than the 12 months imposed by the agency, and he said he doesn't believe are any viable groups with enough money to run rail over the bridge.

A group called Moose Consortium Inc. has submitted plans for a rail line over the bridge that would go around Bayview Station and service outlying communities such as Smiths Falls, Casselman, Arnprior, Montebello and Wakefield.

That group reported the rail line's removal in 2016 to the CTA, and claims it can pay the \$50 million it estimates it will take to fix the bridge.

07/03/2018

Ottawa Citizen

Ellwood

Prince of Wales Bridge

CITY'S IN A BIT OF A FIX

The federal Liberal cabinet should quash a decision by a regulator compelling the City of Ottawa to fix the Prince of Wales Bridge, Mayor Jim Watson says.

The city is taking a double-barrelled approach in its fight against a Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) order. On top of asking for help from cabinet, the city is also asking the Federal Court of Appeal to consider hearing an appeal.

The CTA order, sent to the city last month, orders the city to restore the rail line north of Bayview station, including the Prince of Wales Bridge, so it would be operable within 12 months of the agency giving running rights to another rail company, or to discontinue the line altogether.

The order follows a 2016 complaint by the Moose Consortium, which raised concerns about the city removing tracks while building the joint Confederation Line/Trillium Line station. Moose (Mobility Ottawa- Outaouais: Systems and Enterprises) wants to run a privately financed regional rail system and has eyed the Prince of Wales Bridge as an interprovincial link.

In a letter sent Tuesday to federal Transportation Minister Marc Garneau, Watson wrote that the CTA made the order without considering ongoing discussions between the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, including local MPs, about connecting the OC Transpo and STO transit networks using the bridge.

"You can certainly appreciate the city 's surprise and disappointment in being asked to make this unfortunate 'either or' determination at this point in time," Watson wrote.

Watson also said he doesn't believe there are viable rail operators that could use the railway.

The Canada Transportation Act allows appeals directly to cabinet.

A spokesperson for Garneau confirmed his office has received Watson's letter and "will follow due process," but wouldn't comment further.

At city hall, Watson said it doesn't make sense for the city to spend millions now to upgrade the bridge when it's not ready to run trains to Gatineau, especially when the city 's third phase of LRT is projected to be to Kanata.

As Watson described it, "Phase 3A" would be to Kanata and "Phase 3B" would be to Gatineau.

The city doesn't have money to fix the bridge. It doesn't even have money yet to build LRT to Kanata.

With no work planned, the city contends that the CTA's order simply isn't doable under the funding constraints.

"We don't believe that the decision is fair for the City of Ottawa and for our taxpayers," Watson said.

"We have every intention, as I've said on many occasions, of using that bridge. We want to have the O-Train go over to Taché Boulevard Rapibus station so we have a more seamless transition between people who work in Gatineau and live in Ottawa, and vice-versa."

Watson still thinks a cycling and walking path across the bridge is out of the question.

"I believe that would be a complete waste of tax dollars to do something like that for \$10 million and a few years down the road we have to rip it up and put rail in for the rail system," Watson said, adding the city has an obligation to seal up the bridge and keep people off until it's ready for trains.

Aileen Duncan, a Centretown resident who started a petition in 2016 to keep the bridge open, said people just want to know the city's intentions for the crossing. The city had to block the bridge to pedestrians to protect its liability, but the fences keep getting cut.

Duncan acknowledged the difficulty with the bridge having an active railway designation and she sees positive signs in the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau talking about its future, but she predicted the "landmark" bridge will again become a flashpoint as the warmer months approach.

"It's my impression that the public wants clarity on what the city intends to do with this bridge," Duncan said.

"This bridge isn't going away."

Advocates want action on disused rail bridge

A group advocating for the Prince of Wales Bridge is asking federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau to not let the City of Ottawa off the hook so easily when it comes to the interprovincial crossing.

The grassroots Ottawa River Bridge (ORB), which has a core group of about five people organizing the effort, wrote to Garneau on Monday suggesting that the federal cabinet shouldn't rescind an order from the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA).

The order compels the city to restore the rail line north of Bayview transit station so that it would be operable within 12 months of the agency giving running rights to another rail company. The order also applies to the city-owned bridge spanning the river. The other option offered by the CTA is for the city to discontinue the line, effectively removing the city's control.

The city wants Garneau to step in and is also asking the Federal Court of Appeal to consider hearing a challenge to the CTA's decision.

"The concerns expressed by the City of Ottawa are legitimate. Still, we believe that rescinding this decision would allow for the city's inaction on the bridge and railway to continue," ORB member Elena Prokopenko says in the letter to Garneau.

The ORB would rather Garneau vary the order. The group suggests a one-year extension that would see the city return to the CTA and explain its intended use of the bridge. By April 30, 2019, the city should present a three-year strategic plan to bring the bridge to a state where it can be operational within 12 months, the ORB says.

"In addition, you may wish for the City of Ottawa and Ville de Gatineau to report back to your office in April 2019 to provide an update on their discussions regarding interprovincial transit, an activity that Mayor (Jim) Watson committed to in his 2018 State of the City address," Prokopenko says in her letter to Garneau.

The city doesn't have the money to fix the bridge and return it to an operational rail line. It's part of the city's long-term transit plans " Watson calls it "Phase 3B" of the third stage of LRT, with Phase 3A being LRT to Kanata " but there's no timeline. The mayor is against spending \$10 million to temporarily repurpose the bridge as an interprovincial pedestrian and cycling path.

In his own letter to Garneau earlier this month, Watson complained that the CTA made its decision without considering the discussions between local politicians about connecting the Ottawa and Gatineau transit systems using the bridge.

The CTA started the investigation after receiving information from the Moose Consortium, which raised concerns about the city removing tracks near Bayview station during the construction of the joint Confederation Line and Trillium Line station. Moose (standing for Mobility OttawaOutaouais: Systems and Enterprises) has ambitions of starting an interprovincial rail network using the Prince of Wales Bridge.