

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - OTrain

18/07/2009 *Ottawa Citizen* *Otrain*

Woman struck by O-Train dies

A 39-year-old woman is dead after she was struck by a northbound O-Train Saturday morning.

Police were called to the O-Train tracks just north of Walkley Road west of Bank Street shortly after 10 a.m. The train was heading north from Greenboro station and the driver made every effort to stop when he saw the woman, who, he told police, was lying on the tracks, said Acting Insp. John Maxwell.

The 11 passengers on board the train at the time were unaware of what was happening until the train began to slow, he said. Police tape blocked the train tracks on both sides of the Walkley Road overpass and a yellow tarp covered a section of the tracks as investigators worked at the scene Saturday afternoon.

The O-Train is not in service while police are on the scene.

10/01/2013 *Ottawa Citizen* *Otrain*

Ottawa police and the Transportation Safety Board of Canada are investigating after an O-Train struck and killed a person who was on the tracks.

The rail accident happened around 7:20 p.m.

Ottawa paramedics referred inquiries to police.

Police said they were in the very early stages of the investigation but are saying they had no reason to suspect foul play.

The Transportation Safety Board is an independent agency that investigates marine, pipeline, railway and aviation transportation incidents.

All O-Train light rail transit service was suspended on Wednesday evening, with operators hoping to resume service by Thursday morning.

14/01/2014 *Ottawa Citizen* *Otrain*

O-Train upgrade targeted for late-February completion

The completion of the long-awaited upgrade to the O-Train system is still more than a month away, a city official said Wednesday.

The \$60-million project, which council approved in June 2011, was supposed to be finished by last September, but delays have now pushed that date into late February.

The current goal is to begin offering the expanded service on Feb. 21.

However, if you're marking your calendar, it might be wise to use pencil.

"There are unexpected circumstances that we can come across and there may be something that comes up that impacts our schedule," said Richard Holder, a manager in the city's rail implementation office, which is overseeing the project.

Snow and cold make this a challenging time of year to implement a new system and provide a 100 per cent guarantee on a delivery date, he said. "We're doing our best to meet a plan."

In the meantime, testing and tinkering continues.

Workers this week were completing some track work and making a few minor modifications to the track-and-signalling system based on the results of testing conducted before Christmas.

Part of the delay is because half way through 2014, the signalling system the city was planning to use had to change due to new federal protocols.

Starting Sunday, mock service using the new trains will begin overnight. Holder said this is called "systems acceptance testing". Essentially, it's to make sure everything works together and the various systems are talking to each other properly.

The mock service will operate several nights a week for four weeks, between 10:30 or 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.

There will, of course, be no passengers on board, as drivers familiarize themselves with the new trains and with having four trains on the line at a time.

For rail buffs, this will be the first chance to see the city's new Alstom Lint trains in action.

If everything goes as planned, at the end of the four weeks, O-Train service will be shut down for six days for final operator training and to fully complete the switch from the old system to new by making physical changes to the platforms and signage at stations.

"Once those changes have been made, that's when we can start the full service," Holder said.

The shutdown is currently scheduled to begin on Feb. 14. That timing coincides Carleton University's reading week, so ridership demand would likely be lower that week.

As it has during previous shutdowns, OC Transpo will operate a parallel bus service along the O-Train route. The city will also keep that service in place for the first week of operation under the upgraded system, in case any problems arise, Holder said.

Once completed, the upgraded O-Train service will run approximately every nine minutes at most times of the day and every 15 minutes late in the evening and on Sundays between Bayview and Greenboro stations.

12/08/2014 *Ottawa Citizen* *Otrain*

O-Train service continued to be suspended Tuesday, a day after a minor derailment near Carleton University involving a northbound train.

Paramedics confirmed they responded just before 3:30 p.m. on Monday to an incident near the university's O-Train stop.

OC Transpo alerted commuters via Twitter that O-Train service was being replaced by Route 107, running every 15 minutes between Greenboro and Bayview stations.

When the train was evacuated following the derailment on Monday, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back.

She was taken to hospital as a precaution, paramedics said. No other injuries were reported.

Police were also on scene. OC Transpo security were investigating the cause of the derailment, police said.

There were signal issues with the train at about 2:30 p.m., according to a customer service representative at OC Transpo, but those may have been unrelated to the service interruption.

Commuters were told they could take bus route 107, running between Bayview and Greenboro stations every 15 minutes, on Monday afternoon.

OC Transpo said that Otrain service would be suspended for the rest of the day Monday. It did not confirm when service would resume.

13/08/2014 *Ottawa Citizen* *Otrain*

O-Train derailment a mystery

The cause of Monday's minor O-Train derailment near Carleton University remained unknown on Tuesday, even as full service resumed in the morning.

O-Train service resumed at about 8:45 a.m., a day after the minor derailment involving a northbound train near the university's station.

A city spokesperson said on Tuesday that it would be "premature" to discuss possible causes of the derailment, because the cause remained under investigation. It was unclear how long the investigation will take.

Transit staff worked through Monday night and early Tuesday to re-rail the train, move it to Walkley Yard and conduct inspections and repairs to the track, the city's manager of transit operations Troy Charter said via email.

When the train was evacuated after the derailment, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back.

She was taken to hospital as a precaution, paramedics said. No other injuries were reported.

Derailed blamed on human error and bad switch

The city is blaming the recent O-Train derailment on human error and a spring switch that didn't close properly.

On Aug. 11, just after 3 p.m., the O-Train travelling north toward Bayview station experienced a partial derailment as it approached Carleton station.

When the train was evacuated after the derailment, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back. She was taken to hospital as a precaution. No other injuries were reported. The O-Train returned to regular service at 8:45 a.m. the next day, once the necessary repairs and inspections were conducted to the track and signal infrastructure to ensure that train service could safely return to regular operation.

In an interview Friday, OC Transpo general manager John Manconi said there's been no issue with the switch since the incident.

"It's functioning perfectly now," he said.

An investigation has revealed that a spring switch, which is a piece of rail infrastructure that moves to direct a train from one track to another, remained slightly open, causing the train's second and third wheel sets to derail.

The train was travelling at approximately 20 km/h at the time.

"The investigation indicates that the spring switch did not properly close when a previous southbound trip travelled over it, resulting in a piece of the spring switch to become dislodged, resulting in the switch remaining in an open position," Manconi said.

There was also a human factor at play. The operator failed to exit the train and physically inspect the track switch to ensure full alignment of the track after noting a signal light irregularity.

The operator contacted the rail traffic control centre and confirmed that the signal irregularity was not due to another vehicle being in the section of the track.

The operator reduced the travelling speed in accordance with the rules.

When signal irregularities arise, operators are trained to follow Canadian Rail Operating Rules, which include exiting the train to conduct an inspection.

"This procedure was not followed in relation to this occurrence. Transit Services Department has taken the appropriate internal action to ensure adherence to operating procedures," Manconi said.

The operator is on "investigatory leave," which means they continue to be paid.

"We take appropriate action once we have all the facts and information before us," Manconi told the Citizen.

11/09/2014 Ottawa Citizen Otrain

O-Train pitched as name for rail system.

London calls it the "Underground," Montreal calls it the "Métro" and Vancouver calls it the "SkyTrain."

Now Ottawa may soon adopt the name O-Train for its entire innercity rail network.

O-Train was first selected by city staff in 2001 as the name of Ottawa's north-south line between Bayview and Greenboro stations.

Council later adopted the name "Confederation Line" for the new east-west light rail line between Blair and Tunney's Pasture stations during the construction phase, but said at the time that OC Transpo and the transit commission would determine a formal name at a future date. It appears that time has come. The transit commission next week will be asked to endorse a plan that sees the entire network called O-Train, with the east-west line to remain as the Confederation Line and the north-south line to henceforth be called Trillium Line.

If the commission agrees, city council will have the final say.

Staff recommended the name Trillium Line because it is easily read, pronounced and understood in both English and French, and because it makes an indirect reference to Ontario's provincial government (the trillium is Ontario's official flower and is also found in the Ottawa area).

The name Confederation Line was chosen because its alignment and one downtown station bring it close to Parliament Hill, and because the 13 stations across the city mirror Canada's own development as a nation through the federal government's investment in national railways. The name is also easily read, pronounced and understood in both English and French.

The transit commission is also expected to discuss a report on the ongoing O-Train expansion project.

The expanded service was originally due to be completed by fall 2014, but the report contains no official launch date.

A staff report says the city still needs to build the Sawmill Private noise barrier and complete the testing and commissioning of the line before the new expanded service can be put into operation.

The city is also anticipating a sixday shutdown in order to facilitate the switchover from the existing system to the new one.

The expansion includes the addition of two sidings, which are short sections of parallel track where trains in opposite directions can meet and pass each other, and the purchase of six new trains.

Once complete, the north-south line will accommodate 1,900 passengers per hour per direction, compared to 1,100 currently.

18/09/2014 Ottawa Citizen Otrain

'O-Train' may soon refer to future lines

On Wednesday the transit commission endorsed using O-Train to refer to both the existing north-south line between Bayview and Greenboro stations, and the future east-west light-rail transit system, between Blair and Tunney's Pasture. The east-west line will still individually called the Confederation Line. The north-south line, which has been known as the O-Train since it opened in 2001, will be known as the Trillium Line. Together, they'll be called the O-Train. There will also be numbers and colours to brand the different lines, to help people navigate them. Confederation is expected to be known as Line 1 and use red as a colour, while Trillium will be Line 2 and use green, according to a presentation given to the commission. "People adapt. They'll use numbering or the colouring, whatever they feel comfortable with," said transit general manager John Manconi.

19/09/2014 Ottawa Citizen Otrain

Two men arrested in bloody knife fight

Carleton student sees clash from seat on O-Train

Two men were arrested after a bloody knife fight at Carleton University on Thursday.

Police said they were called to the school around 11:30 a.m. after receiving a report of an assault near the O-Train.

Jordan Howran, a Peterborough native majoring in history at Carleton University, said he was sitting on the O-Train when he saw a fight break out.

"I'm from a small town, so I don't usually see that stuff, especially at 12 in the afternoon," he said. "Crazy."

Howran said a heavy-set man pulled a small knife on a thin man and stabbed his arm. When the stabbing victim turned the knife on his attacker, the heavy-set man was then stabbed in the hand as he held onto the knife.

The heavy-set man ran to the OTrain with the knife and boarded in an attempt to escape the other suspect.

"He's standing in the doorway claiming that the other guy has the knife," Howran said.

However, Howran said the heavy-set man hid the knife in the front pouch of his hoodie just before the thin man boarded the train and stood in the doorway so the door wouldn't close.

Howran said people were yelling at the two men to get off the train.

"There was blood everywhere," Howran said.

When police arrived at the station, the thin man started to run away.

Howran said. "Police tackled him."

Police said both men suffered minor injuries.

One of the men was carrying a backpack. Carleton wouldn't confirm whether the two are students.

O-Train plan to include airport link

Extension's new spur comes with environmental assessment study

A rail link to Ottawa's international airport, once dismissed by city officials, might be in the cards after all.

As part of its ongoing environmental assessment (EA) study on plans to extend O-Train service from Greenboro Station to Riverside South, the city is expected to unveil next week a preferred option that includes a new spur to the Macdonald-Cartier International Airport and the EY Centre.

"What we're doing here is we're getting the EA approval for that, but the decision as to when we're actually going to build it and implement it is a separate item," said Colin Simpson, city senior project manager of transportation planning.

Extending the O-Train's Trillium Line is part of the ambitious second phase of light rail construction " a \$3-billion plan that would also see service extended east, west and south to Place d'Orléans, Bayshore Shopping Centre and Algonquin College by 2023.

It's unclear just how much the airport link would cost, Simpson said. The estimated price tag of the O-Train extension from Greenboro to Bowesville Road in Riverside South is about \$100 million.

An earlier incarnation of the plan had the airport spur travelling south of Alert Road, near the Hilton Gardens Hotel, but Simpson said the proposed alignment has now changed to travel north of the EY Centre, which would also be served by a station.

The preferred station location at the airport is between the terminal building and the parking garage.

"It would come around on a big sweeping curve on an elevated platform, and it would rise up to the third floor of the parking garage," Simpson said.

Ottawa International Airport Authority welcomed the development. "We're obviously very much in support of a link to the airport," said vice-president Krista Kealey.

Without knowing the estimated cost of the spur, Kealey said, it was premature to discuss what, if any, contribution the airport authority would make.

"We're looking forward to moving the project forward and being there with them," she said.

The proposed plan envisions what Simpson called a dual overlay, " which means service would be provided to meet the demands at a given time.

"During peak hours, trains would primarily serve Riverside South with every second or third train going to the airport; during off-peak hours, such as during the day and in the evening, that would be flipped, so most of the trains would go to the airport and fewer trains would go to Riverside South," he said.

That the city's transportation planners are including a spur to the airport as part of the preferred option is a noteworthy development.

A 2013 report had ruled out such a spur and instead called for upgraded service on the 97 bus.

But that didn't sit well with airport management, and by the end of November, a compromise to include exploring a link to the airport as part of the EA was reached.

This is one of three environmental assessments being undertaken as part of Phase 2, which could add as many as 19 new stations and 35 kilometres to the LRT network.

The study area includes the existing Trillium Line corridor, between Bayview and Greenboro stations, the Walkley Yard maintenance and storage facility, and the proposed southern extension.

The feasibility of new stations at Gladstone Avenue (north side) and Walkley Road (south side) are also part of the current study.

Residents can learn more at two open houses next week; the first is at the Jim Durrell Recreation Centre, 1265 Walkley Rd., on Jan. 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. (OC Transpo routes 1, 8, 41, 87, 114, 144 and 146); the second is Jan. 15 at St. Anthony's Banquet Hall, 423 St. Anthony St., from 6 to 8 p.m. (OC Transpo routes 14, 85 and the O-Train).

The finalized staff recommendations for the O-Train extension will be presented to the transportation committee in Jun

30/01/2015 Ottawa Citizen

Otrain

The future of Ottawa's transportation system was unveiled Thursday at a splashy event at Lansdowne Park. The Citizen's Matthew Pearson was there to record people's impressions.

Two dozen politicians from three levels of government, senior city officials, rail executives, schoolchildren and the media were all on hand when a curtain dropped inside the Aberdeen Pavilion to reveal a full-sized Alstom Citadis Spirit light-rail car - the same vehicle that will be used on the Confederation Line once it's fully operational in 2018.

"It's now starting to feel real that we're going to get light rail in this city," Mayor Jim Watson excitedly told reporters after climbing into the rail car following the formal program.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Starting Friday, the vehicle will be on public display in the Aberdeen Pavilion seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., until the end of March.

After that, it will be moved to OC Transpo headquarters on St. Laurent Road for driver training.

But Watson said he's keen to get the car out to another location in the city, such as a shopping centre. "The more people that see this train, the more they come away pretty impressed with what this project is all about," he said.

The featured car is a mockup that measures 17 metres in length, including the control room where drivers will sit.

The actual train is 48 metres long and can accommodate 300 passengers.

RIDER EXPERIENCE

The Alstom train is designed for passengers, said the senior vice-president of the company's North American operation. That means it's fully accessible, has big windows, and doesn't vibrate or make a lot of noise.

"You feel like you're in your living room," said Jérôme Wallut. "It's quite comfortable."

The display has a distinct newcar smell and the look and feel of other OC Transpo vehicles, including royal-blue seats and yellow grip poles.

IN GOOD COMPANY

In addition to the numerous European cities with similar models of Alstom trains, the company also has rail projects in a number of great North American cities, including Washington, D.C., Seattle, Miami and our neighbour to the east, Montreal.

WHAT CHIARELLI SAID

If history had played out differently, Ottawa could have celebrated this milestone years ago.

But Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli " the former mayor, whose 2006 plan for north-south light rail was scrapped not long after he lost that year's municipal election to Larry O'Brien " didn't want to talk about that on Thursday.

"I don't want to rehash history. This is where we are today," he said, noting it was an exciting moment for Watson, city council and senior officials, such as city manager Kent Kirkpatrick.

"This is a real feather in their cap."

WHAT ABOUT PHASE 2?

With a tangible train car now on display, attention turned to funding for the second phase of light rail, a \$3-billion plan that would extend the system farther east, west and south.

"I never miss a chance to talk about that," Watson said, noting the formal funding request will likely be made later this year.

The province has already committed to helping and the federal government will make its decision in the same spirit it did the earlier contribution, said Ottawa-Orléans MP Royal Galipeau.

"We're now in 2015. The decision we made for Phase 1 was made five years ago, in completely different circumstances," he said.

"But the spirit has not changed."

Expanded O-Train Service to Begin on Monday

Ottawa Ontario - O-Train riders should spend less time waiting for their train next week after service is expanded on Monday.

OC Transpo will put four of its new trains to work on the O-Train line, and begin servicing stations more frequently, OC Transpo said in a news release.

The O-Train line will be shut down on the weekend to implement the expanded service.

Bus Route 107 will service the route instead, running every 15 minutes on Saturday, and every 15 to 30 minutes on Sunday, the release said.

Starting Monday, O-Train will service stations every 10 to 12 minutes during weekdays and Saturdays, and every 10 to 15 minutes on Sundays.

The O-Train service currently operates two trains on the line that arrive at stations every 15 minutes.

OC Transpo expects the new Alstom Coradia Lint trains to reduce travel times on the line, and to service stations even faster, as often as every eight to 10 minutes, as signals and operations are adjusted to optimize service, the release said.

O-Train service will also begin at 06:00 on weekdays, half an hour earlier than before.

An "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations stopped O-Train service in its tracks Tuesday, forcing thousands of morning commuters onto the replacement 107 bus service along the north-south corridor.

Crews are working to diagnose the problem immediately and fix it, but city transit commission chairman Stephen Blais said there was no indication when the problem would be fixed.

It's the second day in a row that a mechanical failure has caused problems on the rail line, leaving city officials red-faced.

On Monday, the city had planned to launch expanded O-Train service with fanfare, inviting reporters to a 9:30 a.m. briefing at Carleton University.

But a switching malfunction caused an hour-long delay. Later in the day, the service was operating as planned.

"It's certainly been a frustrating few days," transit commission chairman Stephen Blais told CBC Radio Tuesday.

He apologized to OC Transpo customers and, in particular, riders of the O-Train.

The \$60-million upgrade, which was months behind schedule, is intended to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times Monday to Saturday and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

Blais said crews discovered Tuesday that there's an "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations that was installed as part of the expansion.

Apparently, it's sending a signal back to the trainyard to indicate that there is a problem on the track, which is prompting drivers not to proceed.

The signals are crucial to the system because the majority of the Trillium Line runs on a single track and then at three locations it splits to two tracks so the trains can pass. The signal is meant as safety feature to indicate there's a problem on the track and the train shouldn't proceed.

"Obviously we take safety and security very seriously, we don't want to have train collisions, so the operators were obeying the signal they were receiving, the red light," Blais said.

The issue on Monday and Tuesday are "very unfortunate coincidences" but not directly related, Blais said. A mechanical failure at the older switch at Carleton University was the cause of Monday's delay.

"We're going to get to the bottom of this issue and make sure we have everything fixed and ready to go as soon as we can," he said.

"We had hoped that things would work perfectly on Day One, but obviously there were some hiccups."

With files from Emma Loop

Switch glitch mars launch of added O-Train service

Commuters on the O-Train were left fuming Monday morning after a glitch halted the expanded service in its tracks - in front of the media who had gathered for the launch - leaving a red-faced Transit Commission chairman to apologize to stranded riders.

Transit Commission chairman Stephen Blais's arrival at the Carleton University O-Train station was delayed after he opened the expanded service at the Greenboro station.

Blais spent part of his morning at Greenboro station apologizing to riders for the delay after a switch malfunction halted service on the day city staff launched expanded service on the Trillium line.

"Just like when you buy a brand new house, you move in, you expect everything to be perfect and every once and a while there's a couple things that aren't exactly the way they are supposed to be," Blais said. "Our staff fixed them very quickly."

The city had planned to launch the event with fanfare, inviting reporters to a 9:30 a.m. briefing at Carleton University.

Blais and OC Transpo general manager John Manconi, who were both stuck at Greenboro, arrived an hour late to the event with dozens of furious commuters. Some of the O-Train riders had been delayed as long as an hour as a result of a switch malfunction at the south end of the passing track at the Carleton University station.

"Obviously when we have errors in that system, we want to be 100-per-cent sure that we're not going to have a collision," Blais said.

Mayor Jim Watson was scheduled to attend the launch, but was absent; he was recovering from the pelvic injury he suffered in a snowmobiling mishap on Saturday.

Watson said in a statement sent out after the train was back up and running that Monday marked a milestone in Ottawa's transit history.

"The completion of the O-Train Trillium Line Expansion project demonstrates our city's continued commitment to providing safe, reliable and efficient transit service," Watson said in the statement.

For Lisa Ducharme, the service wasn't so reliable. She said she wasn't sure she would take the train for her commute home.

"On a Monday morning, to have this much of a mess going on, that's just extremely disappointing, especially when we see all the reporters and cameras," Ducharme said. "It was extremely frustrating."

Commuter Sheila Darlaston said it took her 30 minutes to get from the Greenboro station to Carleton University before she was transferred to a bus.

Darlaston said the O-Train glitch on the city's launch day was "embarrassing" and "ridiculous."

"The service still sucks. We've spent all this money, all this taxpayer money on more crappy service," Darlaston said. "I don't think we are any further ahead, really."

Krishna Madaparthi, a deaf passenger who was stuck on an O-Train, said he looked at the OC Transpo Twitter account to find out what was happening when the train stopped, but it hadn't been updated.

"I had no idea what was going on while we were waiting," he wrote. "I don't know if there was an announcement."

Madaparthi said he followed other passengers off the train at Carleton University and onto a bus that took him to work at Tunney's Pasture.

Veronica Green, a master's of journalism student, said there was an air of excitement at the Bayview O-Train station. OC Transpo employees handed out flyers about the improved Trillium line.

The excitement was dampened, Green said, when passengers had to wait on the train for 20 minutes before it began to move. After a second 20-minute delay, the train arrived at Carleton University shortly before 9 a.m.

"It was a very packed O-Train of grumpy people," Green said. "As soon as the announcer comes on and there's a bit of a crackle on the speaker, so many groans. People know what's coming."

The first day of the improved service began earlier in the morning without a hitch. Manconi said he received nothing but positive feedback from riders before the glitch shut down O-Train service.

"Up until then, service was very good and we heard lots of positive comments," Manconi said. "Can we do better? Absolutely. We will be better."

Monday was the first day for an enhanced service that is meant to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times on Monday to Saturday and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

O-Train shut down after botched launch

Just call it the No-Train.

A day after the botched launch of the highly anticipated O-Train expansion, the service was shut down indefinitely Tuesday due to an "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations.

Replacement buses were brought in to deliver morning commuters, while crews tried to diagnose the problem. Trains were being run through the night Tuesday to test the system.

The incident left Ottawa officials red-faced for the second day in a row.

On Monday, a mechanical failure caused an hour-long delay on the rail line, just as the city was trying to launch the expanded service with some fanfare, having invited media to a 9:30 a.m. briefing at Carleton University.

On Tuesday, drivers didn't even get the trains out of the yard before the troubles set in.

"This is certainly a frustrating experience for everyone, especially for those who use the O-Train and particularly those who got stuck yesterday unaware of the difficulties, and may have been late for work or school or other commitments they had," transit commission chairman Stephen Blais told the Citizen. For riders and residents, however "whose fares and property taxes fund OC Transpo" it's actually been a frustrating few years. Consider:

A 53-day transit strike in the dead of winter, 2008-09;

A so-called "route optimization" plan designed to save \$22 million that saw rerouting, merging of routes and cancelling of neighbourhood bus runs in off-peak hours, 2011;

A multitude of delays, issues and bugs with the introduction of the Presto tap-and-go pay system, 2012-13;

An issue with new double-decker buses that saw exhaust vented into the cabins, making at least one driver so sick he had to be hospitalized, 2012; and

A \$60-million O-Train expansion project, which was approved in June 2011 and was to be completed last September, but remains mired in trouble.

Yet next Wednesday, council is poised to approve an average fare increase of 2.5 per cent. If approved, the measure would see the single cash fare exceed \$3.50 as of July 1.

It's all fed criticism of OC Transpo services from those who say they are too expensive, too unreliable and too frustrating to bother with.

And, behind the latest problem, looms another question from the critics: If the city can't get the OTrain to work, how can residents have confidence that the \$2.1-billion Confederation Line will work once it opens in 2018?

"That is a discussion that, I can assure you, we have already begun to have," Blais said Tuesday. "Certainly as we progress with finding and fixing the problem on Trillium Line, it will be OC Transpo's job and the city's job to regain confidence of our ridership."

Blais defended the city's system, calling it a "model for transit services in North America."

The O-Train upgrade was intended to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times Monday to Saturday, and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

Blais said crews discovered Tuesday that there was an "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations that was installed as part of the expansion. It's sending a signal back to the train yard to indicate there is a problem on the track, which is prompting drivers not to proceed.

The signals are crucial to the system because the majority of the Trillium Line runs on a single track. At three locations, it splits into two tracks so trains can pass. The signal is meant as safety feature to indicate there's a problem on the track and that a train shouldn't go any farther.

"All those passes have to work all at the same time for the four trains to continue on their way and make sure we avoid a collision," Blais said, adding that safety

and security are the city's highest priority.

The issues Monday and Tuesday are "very unfortunate coincidences" but not directly related, Blais said.

A mechanical failure at the older switch at Carleton University was the cause of Monday's delay and it was repaired by RailTerm, the company contracted to perform maintenance and repairs on the O-Train track.

In a statement issued late Tuesday, OC Transpo general manager John Manconi said crews have actually identified two signal interruption issues. The first is due to an isolation joint used to separate different train signals. Eighteen locations exist on the new passing tracks and each one is being inspected and repaired as needed, Manconi said.

The second issue is still under investigation. The approximate location has been identified, but the root cause is unknown. The problem could be anything from a faulty wire to a connection, and the work involves physical inspection to identify, locate and resolve the problems, the city said.

Staff and contractors are "working around the clock on these issues," Manconi said.

OC Transpo will issue a progress report on Wednesday afternoon.

All of this comes after weeks of testing and tinkering on the new system.

In January, the city completed some track work and made a few minor modifications to the track-and-signalling system based on the results of tests before Christmas.

Then, it began operating a mock service overnight, several nights a week, for four weeks, to help drivers familiarize themselves with the new trains and with having four trains on the line at a time, instead of two.

That was followed by a complete shutdown for six days for final operator training and to fully complete the switch from the old system to the new by making physical changes to the platforms and signage at stations.

"We had hoped that things would work perfectly on Day 1, but obviously there were some hiccups," Blais said.

All aboard: O-Trains running again

'You learn from your mistakes,' transit manager says after two glitchy days

After a long night of testing and troubleshooting, O-Train service was back up and running again Wednesday afternoon.

And transit services general manager John Manconi pledged to OC Transpo customers that it's here to stay now that the kinks have been worked out.

This is the latest twist in the launch of the highly anticipated O-Train expansion - which has not gone well so far.

A mechanical failure on Monday fouled up plans for a media event and delayed morning commuters for at least an hour. Trains did operate normally later in the day.

Then on Tuesday, a pair of issues forced OC Transpo to shut down the service and call in replacement 107 buses to deliver passengers along the north-south corridor.

Manconi admitted to reporters at a media briefing at city hall that things haven't gone smoothly, and he apologized to riders.

But he also defended OC Transpo, saying complaints and concerns are seen by his organization as an opportunity for continuous improvement.

"You learn and grow from your mistakes and issues and I believe what customers don't want to see organizations do is give up," he said. "We worked through the night, we had an integrated team looking at this."

What they found is that the track circuit failure that shut down the system Tuesday was caused by an issue with an insulated joint. The joints are held in place with clips that have a plastic sleeve and one of the plastic sleeves was broken, according to Michael Morgan, director of rail operations for transit services.

That meant crews had to go out and find all the plastic sleeves that had failed and replace them. Of the 32 sleeves installed on the entire system, seven had to be replaced.

The 25 remaining clips are all in good condition, Morgan said, but the city will go back to the manufacturer to ask why the clips failed.

"We believe that, in short term, we're good to go and within a few days or a week we can replace them with a different configuration that will last longer, will be more effective," he said.

The city won't have to take the O-Train off-line to replace the remaining clips because the work can be done overnight during out-of-service hours, Morgan said.

The second failure was related to the signal system - it received an odd error message that had not come up in testing and that perplexed crews. The issue was eventually resolved by RailTerm, the company contracted to perform maintenance and repairs on the O-Train track.

Manconi told reporters he was already hearing reports that customers were back on the trains, and noted the 107 bus service would be phased down throughout the afternoon.

OC Transpo operated 75 uninterrupted O-Train trips Wednesday morning before relaunching the service, Manconi said, adding there was nothing to indicate the latest issues were weather-related.

He also said OC Transpo previously conducted hundreds of hours of testing and driver training and hired an independent team to assess the system before it was launched this week.

Still, he did not rule out future issues.

"Will we have interruptions in the future? Absolutely, I cannot guarantee you we will not," he said.

The \$60-million O-Train upgrade was intended to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times Monday to Saturday and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

O-Train System Shuts Down 8 Times in 3 Months Since Trillium Line Expansion

The O-Train has been shut down eight times since a \$60 million expansion three months ago promised more convenient and reliable service.

Some commuters have expressed their frustration about re-occurring issues with signals.

Andrew Grenier called it an "endless mess" that seems to happen at least once a week.

OC Transpo runs the Route 107 bus when the train is shut down, but riders like Grenier say the trains unpredictability make it difficult to rely on.

The new system is partially to blame for some of the recent delays, says Coun. Michael Qaqish, vice-president of the City of Ottawa's transit commission.

"There'll be some tweaking that needs to be done and I think we're seeing that as part of the signalization problems in the north-south route," Qaqish said.

Spring Mechanism in Switch Latest Issue

Troy Charter, the assistant general manager for transit operations, said in a statement Thursday that since the implementation of a new service on 2 Mar 2015 the Trillium Line "has experienced several issues with track components... a combination of existing and new equipment... that has impacted service."

The most recent shut-down came about because of problems encountered during routine maintenance of the south switch at Carleton Station.

O-Train Repairs

"While this work was planned to occur overnight with no impact to service, the crew encountered difficulty with the spring mechanism, a mechanical element within the switch, and as a result the work was not completed during the overnight period," wrote Charter.

"As the switch was not functioning, the signal system operated as it should and as such the trains did not receive the series of permissive green signals along the Trillium Line allowing the trains to initiate service."

Grenier said he has filed formal complaints to OC Transpo about the issues.

He said he worries about what the service will be like when the east-west Confederation

Line opens.

The O-Train resumed service Wednesday afternoon

The first spike: Track is laid for beginning of Confederation line

The clanging of sledgehammers on steel spikes rang out Friday as Mayor Jim Watson and area politicians helped lay the first section of track for the \$2.1-billion Confederation line.

The short section of rail at the new Belfast Yard facility will eventually be connected to the 12.5-kilometre line, which will run from Tunney's Pasture in the west to Blair station in the east.

"It was a very proud moment," the mayor said. "An event like this at least shows there is light at the end of the tunnel and there is a train coming. It will be tested in 2017 and ready for customer service for 2018."

Belfast Yard buzzed with construction activity, as the facility containing maintenance bays is to be finished by summer's end.

Friday's milestone sets the stage for the Transitway to be converted to light rail, starting this summer (the eastern leg between Hurdman and Blair closes June 28).

Transit service along the eastern section of the Transitway will be relocated to new bus lanes on Regional Road 174, Highway 417, and other parallel corridors.

Expansion Study Flags Train Safety Changes

The city doesn't know yet if its \$34-million fleet of new Trillium Line trains will be allowed under a rail expansion plan.

The concerns about the Alstom Coradia LINT diesel trains just recently put into commission are part of a blanket risk assessment done for the entire Stage 2 blueprint.

A study of the Trillium Line expansion to Riverside South, with a spur line to the Ottawa International Airport, points out the Alstom LINT trains currently being manufactured have "crash management" specifications that are "more stringent" than the six trains the city received in 2013 and put on the Trillium Line last March.

The issue becomes whether or not Transport Canada will allow trains with two different safety profiles operate on the same line.

The study, which is included in the big Stage 2 report published this week, points out project costs could rise if the city needs to buy a completely new fleet of trains.

However, the city's LRT executive advisor, Nancy Schepers, is optimistic the feds will be fine with the potential train mix.

"City staff have already engaged Transport Canada on this issue and it is not anticipated that fleet replacement will be required," Schepers said in an eMail.

Schepers pointed out the study's role is to flag potential risks and those will be investigated further during the preliminary engineering phase of the project.

The trains are cited as one of four "key issues" for the Trillium Line expansion, along with airspace and runway protection around the airport, capacity of trains to meet the ridership demand, and the potential to find cost savings.

The study also addresses how the line would work with an airport spur.

If the airport spur is built, there could be a "mixed operating model" to serve Riverside South and the airport differently, depending on the day and the demand.

A "shuttle" train could run from South Keys to the airport during morning and afternoon weekday peak times, allowing unimpeded service between Bayview and Riverside South.

The shuttle would serve Riverside South at the other times, with through-trains running between Bayview and the airport.

Establishing an airport rail link by 2023 is still up in the air.

The \$155-million cost for an airport spur isn't plugged into the city's \$3-billion Stage 2 estimate.

The city expects the airport, an obvious beneficiary of public rail service, could help with the funding.

A spokeswoman for the airport authority said Tuesday the organization has "ongoing and positive discussions" with the city regarding the rail link.

23/01/2016

*Ottawa Citizen**Otrain*

There hadn't been a report of the Trillium Line O-Train going through a signal in 14 years.

That streak ended on Nov. 18, 2015.

Council and the transit commission learned Friday that Transport Canada flagged two instances of a train going through signals in the last two months of the year.

There was no damage and no one was hurt, but now the city has to explain to the federal agency what it will do to reduce the hazards.

In the November incident, a train stopped past a signal located before the crossroads of the Trillium Line and the Via Rail line.

Then, on Dec. 24, a train stopped beyond a signal at the passing track near Gladstone Avenue.

According to a memo sent by city manager Kent Kirkpatrick, staff notified rail authorities. The "railway systems performed as intended," he says.

The federal inspector, in a letter to the city, cited the "frequency of emergency brake application events" affecting train operators and "compromising safe operating practices."

The city spent \$60 million on an upgrade of the Trillium Line. The expansion, which launched last March, included new trains and improvements to the signal system.

24/09/2017

*CBC News**Otrain*

Body found on O-Train tracks not suspicious, police say

O-Train is now back online after body was discovered Sunday (24) morning.

The O-Train returned to normal service Sunday afternoon after it was shut down following the discovery of a body on the tracks.

Police said foul play is not suspected. They were concluding their investigation late Sunday afternoon.

Ottawa police had earlier closed the eastbound lanes of Somerset Street West between Breezehill Avenue and Preston Street.

Police tape had also been placed across the multi-use pathway running underneath the Somerset Street bridge.

Bus route 107 served transit users during the shutdown.

13/10/2017

*CBC News**Otrain*

City fined \$42K after O-Trains went through red lights

City penalized for 5 similar incidents since 2015

The City of Ottawa has been slapped with a \$42,708.06 fine after trains on the O-Train Trillium Line blew through red lights at least five times since 2015, according to the head of OC Transpo.

In a memo to members of city council Friday afternoon, transit boss John Manconi said Transport Canada issued a notice of violation to the city on Sept. 21 after the federal agency was notified of an incident in the spring.

On May 3, 2017, a train with an operator on board travelled through a red light signal after another oncoming train had already passed by.

"The O-Train's automated train protection system functioned as intended and brought the train to a safe stop. At no time was the safety of passengers or others at risk," the memo said.

OC Transpo launched an internal investigation into the incident and notified Transport Canada and the Transportation Safety Board.

The Transport Canada fine will be paid out of OC Transpo's budget, the city confirmed to CBC News.

Other cases

Transport Canada issued the financial penalty to the city after it was discovered four other similar incidents have happened since 2015, the same year new passing tracks were installed on the O-Train system.

The city said there were no injuries or damage in any of the five cases and an investigation was launched each time which led to "remedial actions being taken."

Joanna Venditii, director of rail operations, said some of the remedial actions include upgrades to the signals and switches at the Carleton station and an "extensive" review and refresher of training procedures for train operators.

"The Trillium Line has, and continues to serve our customers with safety always being our top priority. While occurrences of this nature are a deviation from the Rail Operating Rules, O-Train operators encounter track signals thousands of times each week," the memo stated.

"Since March 2015 when the new passing tracks were installed, O-Train operators on the Trillium Line encountered signals approximately 1.3 million times, in accordance with the rail operating rules."

18/11/2017

*OC Transpo**Otrain*

Discontinuation of paper passes and tickets

The new fare gates at O-Train stations will require use of a Presto card, U-Pass, STO Multi card, or OC Transpo bus transfer. Paper bus tickets are being replaced. Tickets in their current form will no longer be sold after Nov. 30, 2017.

Use the Presto e-Purse or cash instead. It'll cost you the same or less. On Para Transpo, use cash or money loaded on ParaPay.

You'll be able to use 2017 paper tickets (light orange coloured) on the bus (but not on the O-Train Trillium Line) until April 30, 2018. You can also exchange old bus tickets towards new fare products at OC Transpo Customer Service Centres until Aug. 31, 2018.

Take the "Eh-Train"

Ottawa Ontario - Fancy a ride on the Majestic Moose?

How about heading into work on the Rocket Richard?

Those are just two of the 40 names revealed today for the rail cars that will soon travel along Ottawa's two light rail lines.

The City of Ottawa announced the names, which were submitted by children under 16 during a contest last November, at a ceremony Saturday morning at Ben Franklin Place.

The city said it received nearly 2,000 entries, which were then narrowed down to the winners.

The winning entries drew on a mix of both local and Canadian history, and also included some Indigenous names.

The names of the six Trillium Line cars are:

Nanuq-Polar Bear;

Northern Lights;

Rocket Richard;

Dreamcatcher;

Emily Murphy;

Portage.

Congratulations to all contest winners of the Name The Train Contest.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the competition - Jim Watson 24 Feb 2018.

The names of the 34 Confederation line cars are:

Canada Goose;

Farley Mowat;

Gord Downie;

Inuksuk;

John McCrae;

Logdriver-Draveur;

Lord Stanley;

Louis Riel;

Majestic Moose;

Odawa;

Poppy;

Snowbird;

Bluenose;

Boreal;

Emily Carr;

Jacques Cartier;

Juno;

Nathan Cirillo;

Normandy;

Samuel de Champlain;

Thomas D'Arcy McGee;

Totem;

Tundra;

Wagosh-Fox;

Acadia;

Agnes Macphail;

Amik-Beaver;

Bertha Wilson;

Billy Bishop;

Eh-Train;

Henrietta Edwards;

Maple Taffy;

The Mountie;

George Brown.

Mayor Jim Watson, councillors Stephen Blais, Keith Egli, and general manager of transportation John Manconi presented the 40 winners with two free tickets for the inaugural ride of the Confederation Line.

The 12.5 kilometre line, which runs from Tunney's Pasture in the west to Blair Station in the east, is running six months behind schedule but is expected to open in November 2018

Chance Missed to mark LRT Milestone

The first LRT train travelled through the downtown tunnel on the weekend, right to the edge of Tunney's Pasture.

One would have thought, \$2 billion and five-plus years later, this would be cause for celebration. Where was the magnum of champagne being rapturously smashed on the bow (the bumper?) of the train - the ribbon-cutting by Watson-Naqvi-Chiarelli-McKenna Inc., the appearance of the town crier and Dave Smith? Instead, we had a tweet from the mayor on a Saturday afternoon. Then - hang on - some retweets!

This was a lost opportunity, in other words. But this has been the story with the whole building of the LRT. There has, I think, been a failure to engage the public in pride-building in the biggest project the city has ever undertaken. Mass humility, dearest Ottawa, is overrated.

You know, people love watching things being built. This is why they cut holes in hoarding when a highrise goes up, because everyone has a little kid inside them. We want to see. When they did that rapid bridge renewal on the Queensway, for Pete's sake, they had to install bleachers for all the curious.

During tunnel construction, I wondered why someone didn't mount a webcam so we could peek at daily progress. Why not tell us how many feet they crunched through every day? Where was the boatload of hoopla when the tunnel was finally finished? I mean, I once watched an entire documentary on the making of the Chunnel from England to France. Fascinating.

Where was our riveting story of human achievement by mighty machines? Untold.

These people have ripped up downtown (for years), gummed up Scott Street (for years), rerouted our daily flow. Can't we have the odd high-five?

Why, too, isn't there a trainfacsimile on display somewhere so people can at least have a look inside?

(I see by the web - where we're to learn everything - the train has 14 doors, carries about 300 but with only 120 seats and will travel an average of 35 km/ hour.)

Why, too, isn't there an LRT office downtown that brags about the great stuff we're doing, with models and mock-ups and answers to every question we might possibly have?

Oh, for the days of Guy Laflamme and his heart-stopping, fire-breathing Godzillas to chase the bores away!

And it isn't just me. Here was a followup tweet from Graham Richardson at CTV Ottawa to the transit commission boss, Stephen Blais: "How about allowing a camera down there and we will do a live show? I have been asking for months."

Instead we had this tweet from His Worship: "An incredible and exciting view from inside the LRT tunnel! A train has gone underground just after uOttawa station, travelled through Rideau, Parliament & Lyon stations and emerged at the West portal, just before Pimisi station! It's on it's way to Tunney's!"

David Jeanes is president of Transport Action Canada and a pretty wise man when it comes to all things rail. He agreed the city missed a chance to put on braggly boots and blast its own horn on the weekend.

"I agree. You'd think when there's a good news story, it would be good to have the media and the public aware of it."

He's been watching the construction of LRT pretty closely, partly by relying on weekly updates from the Confederation Line website.

"It's not really engaging the public as well as it could. And I think for a project of this cost, you could certainly afford to have a lot more public information."

After the fiasco of the Rideau Street sinkhole, one might have thought completion of this tricky section - and the tunnel itself - would be a milestone worth a holler or two.

"The actual day that they broke through was never announced," Jeanes said.

"In the east end," he said, "the Blair and Cyrville stations are virtually complete, as are the Belfast yards. Would it be so hard to have public tours one weekend? In 2017 we had Kontinuum, after all, during which tens of thousands managed to take an underground acid trip through the partially built Lyon station without actually perishing."

Public safety is obviously an issue and there may be an abundance of caution being exercised by Rideau Transit Group, which is building the system under contract. It may suit them just to finish the job and hand over the keys, forgoing the dog-and-pony part.

But a thing to remember about a paying audience: We love a dog, we love a pony, we don't love a tweet.

The city responded to our inquiries with the following statement:

"An O -train Confederation Line train was moved from the eastern alignment to the western end over the weekend. This move was part of the testing and commissioning of the train, tracks and guideway. As testing schedules shift due to a number of factors, it was not possible to hold a media event at a precise time. Testing from Tunney's Pasture and the West Portal will now occur on a regular basis, as has been underway for several months from Blair to uOttawa Station.

"The City of Ottawa and RTG are focused on meeting the revised Revenue Service Availability date and launching a reliable, efficient and environmentally friendly LRT system in November of this year.

"Updates on the progress of construction and testing are provided at the Finance and Economic Development Committee. The next update on the Confederation Line will be presented on May 1, 2018." - Steve Cripps, director, O -Train construction