

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers - Smiths Falls subdivision

Monday 04/10/1909 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

C.N.R. route to Toronto via Smiths Falls is approved.
Indignation when surveyors start to stake a line through the Glebe - -

Friday 19/05/1911 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

Sir Donald Mann has announced that the contracts have been awarded for the completion of the Toronto-Ottawa line of the Canadian Northern Railway. The successful tenderers are: J.P. Mullarkey, Montreal; A. Sinclair and Ewan Mackenzie, Toronto. The line will be completed within a year. --

26/05/1911 Brockville Recorder Smiths Falls

Work on New Canadian Northern Railway
Contractor D. A. Mackenzie arrived at Forfar today. Work will be East and West from that point. Work on the construction of the new CNoR begins where Brockville, Westport and Northwestern crosses the CNoR.

Monday 19/06/1911 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

The contractors on the new Canadian Northern Railway between Ottawa and Toronto start work this week on this end of the line and are at present collecting men to commence operations. With a view to having the line completed as shortly as possible, the company has let the work in a number of sub-contracts. Mr. H. Cristin has the contract for the line from the Rideau River out towards Richmond; Messrs. MacDonald and Chisholm are building the road from Hurdman's Bridge to the Rideau at Hogs Back and Mr. Bonneville has the work in hand from the end of the latter division to Richmond. Mr. P.J. Brennan is the contractor for the work from Richmond westwards, towards Smiths Falls.--

Tuesday 11/07/1911 Rideau Record Smiths Falls

Help Scare
Owing to the large number of men engaged by the C.N.R., the Good Roads Commission, and also the number employed as guides of summer tourists. Farmers of Leeds county, especially in Bastard and Burgess and North and South Crosby, are experiencing great difficulty in getting men for haying and high wages are being offered.

Buying Land

The Canadian Northern Railway Company has purchased great tracts of land in Montreal during the past month, the expenditures for the same amounting to the large sum of \$1,350,000. Just what their object is in acquiring this large amount of real estate is altogether a matter of conjecture as the officials absolutely decline to give out any information. It is generally supposed however that it will be used as a site of their Montreal terminal.

Regular meeting of town council Mayor Foster:

A communication from Lavell stating that the CNR had made plans to close certain streets and be advise that the council should acquiesced with plans Mr. Gould moved, seconded by Mr. Chalmers that the agreement on the CNR be ratified re crossing of certain streets - carried.

25/07/1911 Rideau Record Smiths Falls

Dangerous Characters Abroad

The Westport Mirror states that since the work of building the C. N. R. at Newboro was commenced that locality has become infested with tramps and that it is unsafe to travel the roads at night. On Thursday evening two footpads attempted to hold up Dr. G. F. Ackland in the swamp near Portland. One tried to grasp the horse's head while the other tried to catch the wheel of the buggy but both were knocked into the ditch. The following day the home of George Duncan, a prosperous farmer living two miles from Newboro was entered during the absence of the family and two purses containing \$12.70 were taken.

25/07/1911 Rideau Record Smiths Falls

Awarded Contract

Mr. R. A. Girouard has been awarded the contract for the construction of the section of this division of the Canadian Northern Railway, the said section extending from Jones Locks to Otter Lake, a distance of nine miles. Mr. Girouard is getting his camps ready and by the end of the week he expects to have his equipments on the ground so that work may be commenced on Monday. Included in the outfit, which he will use, is an elevator grader, a machine used largely on prairie sections in railway construction and which has been found to give most satisfactory results. It is expected that about one hundred and fifty men will be employed.

Building a Railway - Construction Work on the C.N.R. Begun at Smiths Falls

For a score of years the people of Smiths Falls have been living in more or less expectancy of seeing a new railway built to and through the town and at length their expectations are to be realized. The actual work of construction had been commenced and any who wish to see it with their own eyes and cannot wait until the work is under way within the corporation limits may satisfy themselves by going out into the county a couple of miles. This is what a Record reporter did yesterday and today he can assure his readers that a new railroad is really under course of construction, which will place Smiths Falls on another transcontinental system. It is not more than a year since the Canadian Northern Railway Company began to talk seriously of building a line through Smiths Falls to Toronto and today nearly half the road is finished and contracts are let out for the whole of the uncompleted portion from Sydenham to Ottawa. For the first six miles east of Smiths Falls from the Rideau River, Mr.G. Heniger of Nova Scotia has the been here and getting things in shape. It is one of the biggest contracts on the route including as it does a long cut east and west of the C.P.R. to admit of the subway crossing the line between the shops of the Malleable Castings Company and the Anglican Cemetery. Mr. Henniger is an experienced contractor however and is accustomed to big contracts. He has all the modern equipment for railroad building and had brought on here a complete outfit with which to do the work. He has purchased a block of land from Mr. Condie north of the Malleable shops and here he is fitting up a headquarters for the work. He has put up a number of temporary buildings including an office, a cookhouse and eating room, sleeping rooms for the men, a stable and a blacksmith shop. His plant embraces tramcars, baby locomotives for operating them, a big steam shovel, horses, carts and all the smaller tools used in making a railroad. Yesterday afternoon the Record went out to Mr. Healy's farm, a couple of miles from town where the work of grading was begun a few days ago. It was right at the edge of a thick swamp nearly half a mile long and truly a rough looking place in which to build a railway. Running up to the edge at the west is a ledge of the most approved Montague rock and beyond this a tangle of thick growing timber of nearly every kind. Through this the right of way is 100 feet wide is being

Cleared. Mr. Thomas McIlvenna has charged of this work. Quite a bit of it has already been done. The swamp is low and so the trees do not have to be cut very close to the ground. The result is that the part that is clear full of stumps from three to four feet high and it is difficult to believe that in a few months the smooth running Pullman car will be gliding through these without a jar. But the rock that comes from the hill will be thrown there and thus one part of the road helps make the other. The men employed are Italians and Pollacks but yesterday not a Pollock would work. They said the 12th, of July was a holiday with them and every one of them was celebrating the day in intown. About a half-mile from town on Mr. John McEwen's farm another lot of men and teams are at work and as soon as the various parts of the plant can be placed four or five other gangs of men will be put at work. Within a year the whole line is to be completed and Smiths Falls will have another string in its bow.

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New Railway Station Work to begin at Once on the C. N. R. and Freight Sheds Depot- Will be situated in West End

Work is to be commenced at once on the C. N. R. station. Mr. King the representative of the contractors is here to begin work and is engaging men. The new station will be out William Street on the north side of the street and quite a piece west of Quarry Street. It is well around the bend of the road leading across the swale and as matter of fact is situated at the edge of the swale. The Record understands that a great transformation will take place in that part of town this summer. The swale all about the new station is to be filled in and made into beautiful grounds around the station. All along the company's right of way as far as the swale extends it is to be filled in. The station is to be a handsome structure and of good size. The Record published a good cut of it a short time ago. The freight sheds will be convenient to the center of the town and if all plans carry through as scheduled we are apt to see William Street a pretty busy thoroughfare this time next year.

Germans jumping job at Forfar

The nine Germans who were jailed at Brockville for jumping their job at the CNR construction at Forfar were dismissed from custody by Judge McDonald who ordered that they be paid for the time they had been in jail and further that they be paid every two weeks. He expressed his displeasure at the proceedings that had been taken against the men.

Social Notes: Lombardy

Work on CNR in this vicinity will start very soon.

Page 5. Social Notes

Mrs. & Mr. James McDonald has gone to Sydenham where Mr. McDonald has a contract on the CNR.

Wanted

20 Teams with wagons and men for work on the Canadian Northern Railway Construction near Lombardy. Apply to Frank Milne at works, or R.A. Girouard, in town

CNR Progressing

The CNR construction train with a gang of 57 men reached the city of Belleville Wednesday night and has extended their operations over the Moira River by Thursday noon. The party is progressing at the rate of a mile per day. The work on this division of the new road is being rapidly pushed ahead.

Excerpt from "Lake Notes"

When the CNR reaches Portland, the Rideau will become a great Tourist resort.

Trains running in a month

A party of Canadian Northern Railway officials went over the Toronto - Trenton divisions of the CNR track last week preparatory to the inspection of the Chief Engineer of the Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners. At the conclusion of the trip the announcement was made that the Trenton divisions would be ready for the operation of scheduled trains within a month

Having taken options some time ago on 600 acres of land between the Rideau River and the Merivale Road, the Canadian Northern Railway have now taken advantage of these options and bought the land outright from the owners and on the first of October will take absolute possession.

Those from whom the land was taken --

The object, of course, in acquiring the land is to expedite the entrance of the C.N.R. into Ottawa from Toronto.

C.N.R. Buys Land

A few weeks ago the Record made mention of the fact that the Canadian Northern had taken options on farmlands in the vicinity of Merivale, about five miles from Ottawa. On Saturday the Company took up these options and the purchase money was paid over. The land, which forms an area of one and one-half miles square, is located at the point where the Toronto-Smiths Falls-Ottawa and transcontinental lines of the C.N.R. will merge. Although prices were not made public it is said the cost of the farms was about 250,000 altogether. The object of the company in securing such a large tract of land is thought to be for location of shops and roundhouses, as well as yard space.

Will Boom Rideau Lakes

That the Canadian Northern Railway company, whose Ottawa - Toronto line will touch at many points along the Rideau Lakes Navigation company with the intention of adding to the service and booming the lakes as Canada's premier summer tourist resort, is known to be the latest move of the new road. Hitherto the Rideau Lakes, although possessing almost unrivaled advantages, as a summer resort, have suffered from the want of proper train connection. The C.N.R. line from Ottawa to Toronto, however, will pass through Smiths Falls and through Portland, on the north shore of Big Rideau Lake and thus provide a regular daily service for the tourists from Ottawa and elsewhere. The distance from Ottawa to the lakes being covered in about an hour's time. It was announced at the C.N.R. offices at Ottawa on Tuesday that all the summer resorts along the chain of lakes would be boomed and advertised all over Canada and the United States. It is also just possible that a big summer hotel may be built there as well.

12/09/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Trenton a Division Point

A Bylaw which carried almost unanimously at Trenton on Tuesday grants the Canadian Northern Railway a fixed taxation for ten years and a small bonus in the shape of free land sites, which ensures Trenton as the first Divisional point east of Toronto.

Social Notes

Mr. Rene Girouard who has the contract for one section of the C.N.R. will take up his residence in town and has leased Mr. W.W. Cook's house on McEwen Avenue. Mrs. Girouard and their little daughter who are now in Perth will join Mr. Girouard in their new home here next week.

*Wednesday*13/09/1911 *Ottawa Journal**Smiths Falls*

The Canadian Northern Railway today completed, after one year's dealings, the purchase of land south of Ottawa for its entrance and Ottawa - Toronto line, valued at about \$300,000. More.

21/09/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Nearing Completion

Construction work is rapidly nearing completion on the Toronto - Trenton division of the new Canadian Northern road to Ottawa. The mileage from Don Junction to Trenton is 104 and the work is so far advanced that freight will be accepted on Oct 1.

26/09/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Central Ontario Railway

Although not officially approved it is understood that the Central Ontario Railway from Coe Hill to Picton, comes under Canadian Northern control on Oct 1.

03/10/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Canadian Northern Ontario Railway Open First Section of the Toronto-Montreal Line Next Monday

The first section of the Toronto-Montreal line, 110 miles has been finally approved by the railway commission and will be opened for traffic between Toronto and Trenton on Monday the 9th with a double passenger service daily except on Sunday. Trains will leave Union Station, Toronto 9:30am and 6:30pm arriving at the Central Ontario Station in Trenton at respectively 1:20 p.m. and 10:20 p.m., leaving Trenton 9:10am and 5:40 p.m. arriving Toronto 1:00pm and 9:30 p.m. This double service will be maintained with entirely new standard equipment, including dining and parlor cars. The new line is exceedingly well built and opens up considerable fruit country which was formerly with our direct service and also affords an improved service between Toronto and such points as Cherrywood, Brooklyn, Oshawa, Bowmanville, Orono, Port Hope, Cobourg, Grafton, Colbourne, Brighton, Picton and all points on the Central Ontario Railway.

05/10/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Dismissed the Case

Magistrate Sparham held a lengthy session of the police court this morning to hear a case brought by G.A. Ladceur, foreman against John Arcand a sub-contractor on the CNR. The Plaintiff's claim was for \$71.00, which he alleged was due him for wages. A good deal of evidence was heard in the matter and after going through it all the magistrate decided that the plaintiff was not entitled to the money claimed by and he dismissed the case.

Will positively be built inside a year

Sir William Mackenzie president of the Canadian Northern Railway has been in Ottawa during the week. In an interview he stated positively that the CNR will be running into Ottawa from the east and west within a year. Thus making a line from Quebec to Toronto. This means Smiths Falls residents will this time next year have a choice of two lines of railway want they want to make a trip to the capital or Toronto.

Will Boom Next Season

There promises to be great activity on the Rideau Lakes next year in the matter of new summer homes. The Record understands on good authority that the C.N.R. will exploit the Rideau lakes and make them the most popular resort in Ontario. Plans to this end are said to be under consideration now.

Among those who have recently acquired property on Rideau Lake is Judge Cross of Montreal who has bought some land on the south shore just above the Narrows on which he will erect a handsome cottage before next season. Judge Cross and family occupied Dr. McCalum's cottage this season and were so impressed with the beauties of the Rideau that the judge intends to make it his permanent summer residence.

Mr. S.L. Forrest, Mr. Raoul Girouard and Dr. Wickware have also recently purchased building sites on the lake. The block includes four acres, of which Dr. Wickware has two acres and Mr. Forrest and Mr. Girouard one each. O'Mara's bay which is just this side of the Rocky Narrows.

A handsome cottage has just been completed for Mr. and Mrs. Keech on the south side of the lake this side of Rideau Ferry. It is an eight-room house, large and commodious with a fine ten-foot verandah running all around it. The cottage is on the main land and is within easy reach of town. Mayor Foster has had erected near his residence a handsome bungalow. It is constructed of cedar logs with a wide verandah on three sides and is much more warmly built than his ordinary cottage. It is of most attractive appearance and adds greatly to Mr. Foster's fine property there.

St. James Church Sold

St James church in Montreal, the pride of Canadian Methodism has been sold for \$2,000,000 to Mackenzie and Mann. It is understood that the site will be used for a big station in connection with the C.N.R. and that access to it will be had by means of a tunnel under the mountain.

A Terrible Experience

Vernon Leamy, an Ottawa youth recently passed through what might be termed a terrible experience. He was spending his holidays with his father, Mr. Frank Leamy, in the latter's construction camp on the C.N.R. Smiths Falls to Toronto line near Chaffeys Locks. He was taken suddenly ill one day and had to be brought from the camp to the locks over a rough road. The intention was to put him on a boat at Chaffeys and convey him to a hospital at Kingston. On arrival there however there was no boat to be had and the sick boy had to remain there a whole day until a launch could be procured.

A severe thunderstorm came up and on the middle of it he was placed in his bed in the launch and carried up through the Rideau lakes to Kingston. Arriving there at three o'clock in the morning he was hurried to the Hotel Dieu where the operation for the appendicitis was performed. Leamy hovered between life and death for several days but is now progressing towards recovery.

12/10/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Freight (?) Train Derailed

The opening of the Trenton - Toronto branch of the CNoR on Monday was attended by a mishap. The first train to go over the line carrying passengers, officials of the CNR and a party of newspapermen was wrecked at Grafton when the engine struck a misplaced switch. No one was hurt. The fireman R.W. Wilson was thrown out the window of the caboose but was unhurt. W.C. Moore the engineer stuck to his post and was not injured.

19/10/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

St. Francis Notes

-Three new Typhoid fever cases were brought to the hospital yesterday and the patients were all employees on the CNR construction, one at Lombardy and the other two at Chaffey's. There are eleven Typhoid patents at present at the hospital

-Mr. J.S. Grant timekeeper on the CNR who suffered from a bad attack of Grippe was able to leave the hospital this week.

24/10/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Will apply for Authority to pierce Mount Royal

A dispatch from Toronto says; at the forthcoming session of the Dominion Parliament the Canadian Northern Tunnel and Terminal Company will apply for authority to construct a railway tunnel under Mount Royal, Montreal. The cost of the undertaking is conservatly estimated at 25,000,000, and addition the Canadian Northern Railway is likely to spend a large sum in improvement work around Montreal. It is understood that the application will be sufficiently comprehensive to allow CNR to construct and operate lines connecting its tracks with the CNO and CNQ railroads, and those of the Harbor Commisiers of Montreal. The tunnel will give the CNR easy access to the city of Montreal and avoid the slow handling of trains around the mountain; the tunnel will be approximately three miles in length.

26/10/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls*

Main News

The CNR has applied to the railway gission to link up the Ottawa - Hawksbury line with Montreal. The line is expected to be completed shortly. CPR improvements in Ottawa include gigantic tunnel scheme. Canadian Northern will go with CPR on project.

Building a City C.N.R. Shops to be built near Ottawa. What is now farmland will be a thriving City in 6 Years

A few weeks ago the Record made mention of the fact that the Canadian Northern Railway had made a big purchase of land in the vicinity of Ottawa for which the sum of \$250,000 was paid and which, it was supposed was to be used as a terminal point for the line. This week the Company has made definite announcement as to its plans with regard to the big purchase. On this land immense car shops are to be erected which are to be a duplicate of the Angus shops in Montreal. At first car repairing will be carried on, with car building followed quickly. An engine building, according to the intention of Mackenzie and Mann will follow engine repair departments. Training shops will of necessity have to be established to give the men knowledge of the work. The land on which these shops will be built is known as the James Moffat farm and is situated one half mile below Hogsback and exactly 4 1/4 miles from the center of Ottawa. This is where the Montreal Ottawa and Toronto line joins with the Port Arthur and Winnipeg main line. The land lies between the riverfront and concession 1, Rideau front, and is immediately surrounding the junction point. In from five to ten years Ottawa it is predicted will have at her southern door an adjoining city of from fifteen to twenty thousand people. The name given to the terminal will be Rideau Junction and the company estimates that in five years \$5,000,000 will be spent at this point.

The officials intend that the population of the city that will spring up there will gradually increase and the area extended until it is united with Ottawa. But for the first few years it will be a city apart from the Capital.

Stockyards will be one of the things that will follow the making of Rideau Junction a distribution point. When the stockyards come they will be on a large scale. The heads of the company have no intention of building a car shop at Montreal. That project is out of commission forever. It is considered entirely impossible. Surveying has been completed for the part of the transcontinental between Bell's Corners and Fitzroy Harbor. The line will probably be completed in the fall of 1912.

This line will cross the Richmond Road one half mile north of Bell's Corners, passing through South March. It will cross the lake one eighth of a mile south of Fitzroy Harbor.

All the land in the neighborhood to Hogsback has advanced enormously in value. The farmers from whom the Company purchased this land have been rendered financially independent for life. From \$175 to \$400 per acre was paid for it.

Building a Railway

In connection with the construction of the C.N.R. lines into Ottawa a huge concrete culvert is now under construction at Billings Bridge, between two hills about one hundred feet apart.

Operations have also been commenced on the new Rideau River Bridge which crosses near Hog's Back and which will be part of the C.N.R. Smiths Falls – Ottawa line. It will have three spans of 100 feet and two of seventy-five feet and is to be constructed of concrete and steel throughout. This work is also being rushed but will not be completed before the spring. A shortage of labor is to some extent hindering the progress of the C.N.R. construction, but it is being rushed ahead as quickly as possible.

Gunning Accident

Robert W. Curragh of Kingston aged 17 years met with a shocking accident on Saturday. With a companion he went out to shoot ducks and when hurrying to get into a boat he stumbled over his gun causing it to discharge. The contents entered the young man's killing him instantly. The deceased worked on the CNR construction here last summer and with his savings he was putting himself through Business Collage. He was a bright energetic young man and was a great favorite with his companions.

A Row at the camp

A request was sent into Chief Sweet from Lombardy last night to go out to the CNR construction camp of Girouard and McGuigan near there to quell a riot. There was no warrant and as it was outside the Chief's jurisdiction he did not go but it is understood that there was a big row and that Mr. McGuigan was roughly handled.

Building Subway

Messrs. Jones and Girouard have the contract of building the bridge and subway to permit the CNR Ottawa, Smiths Falls and Toronto line to pass under the CPR tracks here. The subway will be under the CPR line just beyond the north end of the malleable Castings shop where the big fill has been made and will be a heavy and expensive undertaking. It will go under both the Toronto and Ottawa tracks and will be one long subway. The contractors are here now to begin work.

14/11/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls***CNR Station**

The new CNR station at Belleville a cut of which appears in another column is just completed and is a very handsome structure. It is built of brick and has all modern improvements. The new CNR station at Smiths Falls is to be built according to the same plans.

The Last Link

The C.N.R. began construction last week of the last link of the Ottawa - Smiths Falls - Toronto line. Workmen have begun the laying of the steel rails beyond Hurdman's bridge about a mile and three-quarters from the center of Ottawa. The connecting line is to be built from Ottawa to Sydenham. Mr. J.P. Mullarkey the well-known contractor who has the contract for the construction of the road is now in Ottawa superintending the work from there. The distance from that city to Sydenham is 90 miles and the rails will be laid first from Ottawa over the road, which is practically all, graded. Mr. Mullarkey stated that the contract would be completed within a year and this means that the line from Ottawa to Smiths Falls and Toronto will be ready for business in that time. About 1,300 men are engaged on the work.

16/11/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls***That Divisional Point**

An item has appeared in some papers of late stating that the story to the effect that the Canadian Northern Railway had bought up a large tract of land in the vicinity of Ottawa for the purpose of erecting big shops near Hog's Back was untrue. The Ottawa Free Press in which the story of the purchase first appeared states authoritatively that the land was purchased by the C.N.R. And in proof of the statement it produced letters from some of the farmers who sold their land stating that they had received cheques for the same signed by Mackenzie and Mann. The cheque received by one farmer was for something over \$28,000. The Record has no way of finding the truth of the matter but time will tell. If it is not true there is a good chance of Smiths Falls being made a divisional point. The company has purchased a large tract of land here and can get plenty more adjoining the right of way very cheap.

28/11/1911 *Rideau Record**Smiths Falls***Found Dead Young Man's Body Found by Roadside - His Death A Mystery.**

Near Dwyre Hill on the section of the Canadian Northern Railway line out of Smiths Falls, the dead body of James Smith, a member of the construction camp was found on the highway last Saturday about two acres from the little home in which he lived. There are circumstances in connection with the case, which indicate that the unfortunate young man may have met with foul play.

Young Smith was well known throughout that district where he had spent the greater part of his life and residents there are demanding that the mystery of his death be cleared up. James Smith was one of the three sons of an aged widowed mother and it was upon him that she depended most of all for a livelihood. Friday night last John O'Connell, a farmer who lives about three miles further on the Ashton road, called at Smith's house. He was, according to conflicting reports under the influence of liquor, and asked that Smith should come out and show him his way home. It was then about eight o'clock, very dark and a snowstorm was threatening. Smith consented to show O'Connell his way and the two left the house together.

Returned Alone

One hour later O'Connell returned alone. Again he asked that he be shown his way and when in turn he asked as to the whereabouts of Smith he replied that he did not know. "I left him", he replied, "up there on the road".

The Body Discovered

Five hours later the lifeless body of the man was discovered lying near the roadside scarcely two acres from his house. Jack O'Connell, a son of the man, who was the last to see Smith alive, was the discoverer.

Mute Story of Tragic End

Whatever the circumstances of Smith's death, his surroundings showed that he had made a desperate struggle for life. And that the end had only come at an early hour in the morning, and then too, within a stone's throw of his chum's camp and easily within hearing had he attempted to cry out. A thicket of spruce and firs secludes the lonely little road and the crust of snow broken and tramped mutely told the story of the young man's tragic end. Smith was only 30 years of age, strong, robust and in the best of health and spirits, when he left the house, according to the most reliable information, in the company of O'Connell. He was never seen alive after that. Fifteen hours later he was found dead. That the unfortunate young man was drinking there is no doubt. Whether it alone, was responsible for his untimely end is for the authorities, to decide.

Was he Poisoned?

The theory that the liquor, which he drank, contained poison is advanced, but it is considered doubtful if this can be proven. O'Connell who was last in Smith's company, is somewhat hazy as to where or in what condition he left him. He tells his story straightforwardly however and not the slightest suspicion is attached to his name. He feels his position keenly. He will undoubtedly be the chief witness in the inquiry.

Mystery Cleared Up

The mystery surrounding the death of James Smith the young CNR employee who was found dead near Dwyer's Hill a few days ago, was cleared up at the inquest on Thursday. When the jury after a searching inquiry decided that his untimely and tragic death was due to exposure to a fierce storm, which raged that night. The sad details of this case were given in Thursday's record. The most important evidence at the inquest was that given by John O'Connell, Smiths companion on the night of the tragedy. He told of drinking with Smith. It was storming fiercely and they lost each other in the darkness. There were no marks on the body if foul play and the jury decided that death was due to exposure to the severe weather.

Main News

At Brockville police court on Tuesday Hart & Stewart, CNR contractors at Portland were found guilty of selling liquor or allowing it to be sold on a house leased by there near that village for the occupation of the navvie employed by them. They were fined \$200 and \$10 costs. Robert Scott a blacksmith of Portland accused of the same offered contributed \$110 and costs.

Monteque Council

J. H. Lumsden - Jas. Buchanan thinks the reeve and Jas. Chalmers to be committee with full power to take whatever steps they think necessary to compel the CNR Co. to provide proper road for the public in place of the Beckwith road without delay.

Wanted

At once a maid for general housework. Apply to Mrs. Rene Girouard, McEwen Avenue.

Main News

Martin Long and John Dorthy, two CNR construction laborers at Portland went to Brockville on Monday and that night engaged a single room in one of the hotels there. When Long awakened the following morning, Dorthy was missing also \$70 of his money. The police was notified and Dorthy was arrested at Montreal. He was brought back to Brockville for trial.

Will Build Hotel

The Ottawa agent of the C.N.R. says that the company is planning to build a summer hotel if about the same size as the Royal Muskoka at Muskoka near Portland next season. He also stated that a boat service of its own of the convenience of summer resorters will probity (?) be maintained by the railway.

Main News

It is stated that the C.N.R. will takeover the Bay of Quinte road in January of February and those extensive improvements will be inaugurated upon the road. Kingston it is said to be made a terminal point of considerable importance.

Mr. Albert Lucas was brought to the hospital on Sunday suffering from blood poisoning. He is employed on the CNR construction and while at work there last week was accidentally struck on the head with a crowbar. A severe gash was inflicted and later blood poison developed in the wound. He was in a dangerous position for some days but is now much better.

The Marlborough Township council has just approved of the C.N.R. selection of a station site at Dwyer Hill.

Struck Work

About a dozen Austrians became dissatisfied about their pay on a CNR contract ten or twelve miles east of Smiths Falls and struck work yesterday. They came to town and laid a complaint with the magistrate. The BookKeeper was sent for, the men's time was checked and they got their money and went away.

A Still Fine

Wellington Mattice a resident of South Crosby, sent in a plea of guilty to the police magistrate at Brockville on Tuesday morning of a charge of selling liquor without a license to members of the CNR construction gangs. A fine of \$100 with \$9.27 was levied and paid.

Shower of Stones

Miss Hazel Shields, a student at the collegiate had a narrow escape from injury on Friday afternoon. She was from school with a number of other students had reached the head of Elmsley street when a blast was put off on the CNR construction west of the hospital. A shower of stones was sent up in the air in all directions and one good size one traveling further than any other alighted in the folds of a fur scarf, which Miss Shields had thrown about her neck. Fortunately it did not strike her but landed squarely in the fur. It gave her a fright but Miss Shields considers she had a fortunate escape from serious injury.

Rideau Record?

Pinned Under Boulder

Mr. Daniel McDonald of Perth was brought to St. Francis Hospital here on Wednesday night suffering from a very serious accident, which he had met with that day. Mr. McDonald was working on the C.N.R. construction near Portland and was preparing a blast when a huge boulder from an embankment above toppled over on him. He could not extricate himself from beneath it and was powerless to move until some of his fellow-workmen came to his assistance. When Mr. McDonald was rescued from his painful position it was found he was very badly injured. Mr. Henniger, the contractor brought him to the hospital here in his automobile and a physician from Elgin accompanied him. His collarbone was broken and there were cuts on his head and face. In spite of serious nature of his injuries he is making a good recovery.

Work is to be commenced at once on the CNR depot and the representative of the contractors is here now engaging men. The building will be located in the western part of town and will be a handsome structure. The freight sheds will be just east of the station and work will also be commenced at once on them.

Monday **22/04/1912** **Ottawa Journal** **Smiths Falls** **Ottawa**

The latest car known to the railroad world has just been built for the Canadian Northern. It is a gasoline electric and will be used for passenger traffic on the C.N.R. lines between Quebec and the Hotel Lake St. Joseph. It will arrive in Ottawa this afternoon on its way to Quebec. This new car will be demonstrated to a number of people before it leaves Ottawa. In Toronto, where it was built, it was acclaimed to be a wonderful car.

Friday **25/04/1912** **Brockville Recorder** **Smiths Falls** **Chaffey's Locks**

At Chaffey's Locks – New C.N.R. Bridge Being Erected over the Rideau.
The Canada Foundry Co., of Toronto, is placing the new bridge across the Rideau Canal, on the Canadian Northern Railway line, with T. S. Riley foreman and J. Carr, inspector. On April 11th, Mr. Riley brought up span No. 1, being sixty feet long, and unloaded it with the dairy car. He succeeded in taking the cars from under it all right, but when he started to place it the track went down, nearly upsetting the dairy car and span down the high approach grade, to the first abutment. Mr. Riley, who is cool-headed, gave his son, W. R. Riley engineer of the dairy car, instructions to lower his car at once, and succeeded in saving the loss of lives and any further damage.
The following day the bridge gang leveled up the track and succeeded in landing the same span safely to its place. On the 17th inst. All was in readiness. The center span, 160 feet long, was landed in place. Witnessed by a large number of people from the surrounding country. It is expected the last span will be placed in position in a day or two.

Friday **26/04/1912** **Ottawa Journal** **Smiths Falls** **Ottawa**

First car of its kind in Ottawa.
Interested a good many railroad and others was brought to Ottawa yesterday afternoon by the Canadian Northern Railroad. This car is the first combination gasoline-electric car to be used in Canada and will be operated by the C.N.R. on their line between Quebec and Hotel Lake St. Joseph. If the car proves to be as satisfactory as expected the Canadian Northern intend to use others on several lines of the system.
The new car looks much like the ordinary big vestibule trolley car, but it can get up a far greater speed. On a trial trip held two weeks ago between Toronto and Trenton it travelled 52 miles an hour, but can, if required, make 75 miles an hour.
A 200 h.p. engine is carried in the front of the car. Electric light and power, compressed air, etc. are all developed by this engine. Either gasoline or electric power can be used. Besides being cleaner, the new car is more economical for short runs than the ordinary steam train.
The new car seats 75 passengers, three in a seat. It is attractively and comfortably upholstered. It will leave for Quebec today.

Saturday **11/05/1912** **Ottawa Journal** **Smiths Falls** **Ottawa**

Article about gasoline electric car with picture.

Friday **17/05/1912** **Brockville Recorder** **Smiths Falls**

Construction of C.N.R. Proceeding Rapidly Brockville Junction a busy place these days - The laying of steel - Will commence in a few days - Station and freight shed now being built.
Brockville junction, half a mile west of Forfar station on the B. W. & N. Railway, and approximately 35 miles from Brockville, is a busy place these days, and will be for several months to come. The name selected for this station is the diamond of the Canadian Northern Railway's Toronto - Ottawa line and the Brockville & Westport branch. During the past few days' 30 carloads of ties have been shipped from here to the junction and large quantities of steel are also going out. To accommodate this rush and extra merchandise for points along the route, special freight trains have been run out of here in the early morning hours, another leaving today.
In a few days the work of laying steel will commence east and west of the junction and it is confidently expected that before next Christmas trains from Toronto will be running through the junction.
A number of carpenters are now at work building a station and freight shed at the junction. They will have all modern conveniences for the handling of business. (Rideau Record).

Friday **20/06/1912** **Brockville Recorder** **Smiths Falls** **Smiths Falls**

Work on the section of the new CNR station at Smiths Falls commenced yesterday. (Rideau Record).

Thursday **04/07/1912** **Ottawa Journal** **Smiths Falls** **Holbrook Crossing**

A new C.N.R. station, to be known as Holbrook Crossing, is being erected about six miles from Smiths Falls, on the farm of Mr. John Wesley Holbrook, Montague.

Thursday **08/08/1912** **Chesterville Record** **Smiths Falls** **Smiths Falls**

The first CNR train to reach Smiths Falls was on Tuesday last when an engine and five flat cars arrived over the CPR tracks. It is expected that the line from that town to Ottawa will be in operation by this winter.

Monday **19/08/1912** **Ottawa Journal** **Smiths Falls** **Smiths Falls**

Building at the C.N.R. yards goes steadily on, the foundation of the station and about three feet of the superstructure being completed, and the express office begun. The latter is a brick building and the station stone with concrete foundations.

23/08/1912 **Brockville Recorder** **Smiths Falls** **Smiths Falls**

The CNR station at Smiths Falls is well underway. The foundations, which are of concrete, have been finished and the first three feet of the superstructure of handsome stone have been placed. They have already begun to lay the brick for the express office and the whole when finished promises to be a fine building.

Thursday **12/09/1912** **Chesterville Record** **Smiths Falls** **Smiths Falls**

Mr. James Carr, bridge inspector for the CNR arrived in Smiths Falls on Saturday to arrange for the construction of the bridge over the Rideau river there. The bridge, which is to be built at this point, is of the type known as the Scherzer Roller Lift, and as yet there are only two of the kind in Canada. It is expected that the work will be commenced at once.

Friday **13/09/1912** **Perth Courier** **Smiths Falls** **Richmond**

The new Canadian Northern line in eastern Ontario will soon be open to traffic. With the ballast pits at Richmond open work between that point and Smiths Falls and to eastern points will be carried forward with a rush.

Thursday **19/09/1912** **Chesterville Record** **Smiths Falls** **Smiths Falls**

The life (sic) span of the new CNR bridge which is being built at Smiths Falls it (sic) to be 57 feet wide and the total weight of the bridge on the centre pier is 270 tons. The centre balance weight made of concrete will weigh about 150 tons. When the bridge is in place this counterweight will be about 50 feet above the rails. It will be worked by an electric motor, but will also be furnished with hand power equipment.
The construction of the bridge is causing great interest.

Friday 20/09/1912 Brockville Recorder Smiths Falls Rideau bridge

A New Lift Bridge Across the Rideau - Constructed by the Canadian Northern Railway - Third of it's kind to be constructed in Canada (Rideau Record.)

An important piece of work in connection with the building of the Canadian Northern Railway line through here is the new bridge across the Rideau River above Jones' Lock. During the winter the big cement piers to carry the structure were made and now the men are here to erect the bridge. The work will be watched with considerable interest, as the bridge is to be of an entirely new design. It is known as a Scherzer, designed and patented by the Scherzer Bridge Co., of Toronto, and will be sent here in sections so accurately made and fitted that it will go together without the sound of saw or hammer. There are only two other bridges of the kind in Canada, one at Montreal and one for the C.N.R. at Salmon River. It works on the principal of the child's rocking horse and is plainly shown in the accompanying cuts. The first shows the bridge in the act of being lifted. The second shows what it will be like when it is up to permit boats to pass. The lift span is 57 feet wide, and the total weight of the bridge on the center pier when the bridge is in motion is 270 tons. The counter balance weight, made of concrete will weigh about 130 tons. When the bridge is in place this counter weight will be about 30 feet above the rails, as the rails when the bridge is up. This will serve as a guard for trains when up. The width of the bridge will be 171/2 feet. It will be worked by an electric motor, but will also be furnished with power equipment, and will be so evenly balanced and so perfectly made that a man will be able to lift it with one hand. Operated by electricity, everything will be done automatically, signal lights changed according to the position of the bridge without touching them. About 25 men will be employed and it is expected that it will take from four to five months to complete the work of erecting. Mr. T. Riley will be in charge for the Foundry Company. Mr. James Carr, bridge inspector for the C.N.R. is here just now getting the work started.

Friday 20/09/1912 Perth Courier Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

The new steel bridge the Canadian Northern is erecting at Smiths Falls is called a Sherzer, and is the third to be erected in Canada, one at Montreal and the other at Salmon Arm B.C. It works on the principal of a child's rocking horse. The lift span is 57 feet long and the total weight of the bridge on the center pier when the bridge is in motion is 270 tons. The center balance weight made of concrete will weigh about 150 tons. When the bridge is in place this counter weight will be about 30 feet above the rail, as the bridge is lifted the counterweight comes down until it rests on the rails when the bridge is up. This will serve to grand for trains. The width of the bridge will be 171/2 feet. It will be worked by an elected motor but will also be furnished with power equipment and will be evenly balanced and so perfectly made that a man will be able to lift it with one hand. Operating by electricity, everything will be done automatically, signal lights changed according to the position of the bridge without touching it.

Friday 25/10/1912 Renfrew Mercury Smiths Falls

They are having no end of trouble at the bog over which the C.N.R. line crosses in Montague, about four miles out from Smiths Falls, says the News. Last Thursday the C.N.R. locomotive, while passing over, toppled over on its side, the track on one side sinking completely out of sight. They had to get the steam auxiliary from the C.P.R. to get the locomotive out of the mud hole.

Friday 01/11/1912 Renfrew Mercury Smiths Falls Rideau Junction

It is said that the C.N.R. will establish its car shops works at Rideau Junction, on the Kemptville side of Ottawa, a few miles from the city. It will not attempt to connect with Ottawa at all, but will have its own municipal systems of waterworks, tar macadam roadways, and everything to make a modern model town. Eventually, it is thought 5,000 families will be employed there.

Wednesday 04/01/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

Mr. John Rowley, manager of the C.N.R. at Mularkey is in town and registered at the Windsor.

Mr. Rowley reports great progress on the line under construction between Ottawa, Sydenham and Smiths Falls. The line is now built as far as the Jock River, where a steel bridge, 300 feet in length, is now in course of construction.

So far, 170 feet has been completed and the work is being rushed with all possible speed.

Friday 14/02/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

All that is required now for the completion of the C.N.R. line between Ottawa and Toronto is the construction of seven miles of road between the Jock River and Smiths Falls and fifteen miles between Smiths Falls and Sydenham, a total of 22 miles in all.

With the completion of the steel bridge at the Jock River a few weeks ago, the line has been rushed right (--) working out from Smiths Falls with the result that there are only seven miles now between them.

Work has also been rushed on the Toronto end and the fifteen miles that now remain between Smiths Falls and Sydenham will be completed early in the spring.

Mr. C.S. Montgomery, local agent for the C.N.R. stated to a Journal representative this morning, that freight traffic would be operating on the C.N.R. between Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto early in the spring, while they hoped to have the line ready for passenger service by next fall.

The new station costing between twelve and fifteen thousand has been completed at Smiths Falls, while the subway under the C.P.R. and G.T.R. (sic) at the same place is now in use.

Thursday 13/03/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

The C.N.R. has inaugurated their freight service over this division and a consignment consisting of a car of cheese box headings was sent the other day from Lombardy to Portland. The track is now laid from Sydenham to within about two miles from Smiths Falls. The road bed is not in the very best condition, with the result that only an average speed of about 14 miles per hour is obtained. The train is now running regularly between Lombardy, Forfar and Portland carrying construction material.

Friday 14/03/1913 Perth Courier Smiths Falls

Canadian Northern Railway

The Canadian Northern Railway has the track laid from Sydenham, north of Kingston to within two miles and a half of Smiths Falls. The first freight over the new road was in the shape of a consignment of cheese boxes from Lombardy to Portland.

A big construction camp will be established at Smiths Falls by the Canadian Northern Railway, within the next few of weeks to complete the work on the line through there. It will have accommodation for 300 men and this number will be employed at that point working both east and west.

Thursday 20/03/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

Track laying on the Canadian Northern between Toronto and Ottawa is nearly completed, Mr. S.M. Montgomery, C.N.R. ticket agent, told the Journal this morning.

"Yes, the bridge over the Rideau is finished," he said, "All the bridge work is finished, and all that remains to be done, with the exception of ballasting, is a few miles of track laying.

"This should be finished by the end of July, and I expect that our regular service between Toronto and Ottawa will be established during the present year."

As regards the Canadian Northern plans for a permanent station here, Mr. Montgomery could give no definite information. "Sir Donald Mann has something in his hat, but he hasn't divulged to anyone what that something is," he told the reporter..

Thursday 29/05/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

The Canadian Northern Railway had trouble in construction near Sydenham, owing to sink holes. It was learned this morning, however, that the difficulty had been overcome. The line from Ottawa to Toronto is completed now with the exception of four miles a little west of Richmond.

The telegraph line between Ottawa and Smiths Falls is now constructed and the train service on this part will probably open this fall.

The plans for Rideau Junction have been laid out and among other buildings allowed for are a roundhouse and several section houses. There will be thirty tracks at least in the yard.

About 200 men are in camp now on the west side of the Jock River, working on the ballast pit. The first lift of ballast has been laid from Rideau Junction west to Richmond.

Thursday 28/08/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls Rideau Junction

The C.N.R. it is learned, is about to commence preparation for the construction of a roundhouse, a station and part of its shops at Rideau Junction this fall.

For some time there has been doubt as to whether the railway would begin work on the new buildings in the near future. Undoubtedly financial conditions had considerable to do with the delay. Now, however, that the C.N.R. has succeeded in selling its bonds in England, and in securing subsidies from the government, it is learned that the company has decided to go ahead with the work at once, and will award contracts for the building and materials in a short time.

The construction of a round house is becoming absolutely necessary in view of the fact that while the company expects to put into operation its Ottawa Toronto run by January first, it has no place in which to house its locomotives in this district.

As was rumored some time ago, it is practically decided that the line from Rideau Junction into the city will be electrified. This is a matter of considerable importance, as it practically means fast suburban train service from the city to Rideau Junction - the district which, on this account, will likely develop very rapidly from Hurdman's Bridge up to the Rideau.

Wednesday 03/09/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

Vice president D.B. Hanna, of the Canadian Northern Railway, announces that the new road from Toronto to Ottawa will be opened about October 15.

The road is practically complete at present, all the ballasting being finished and the steel almost laid.

Although the line will be officially opened next month, no passenger trains will run over it for some time. Large quantities of freight will be handled, however.

The new stations along the line are almost complete and the agents and operating staffs secured.

Following are the names chosen by the railway for the new stations commencing from Kingston (sic) to Ottawa: Strathcona, Newburgh, Camden East, Yarker (sic), Harrowsmith, Sydenham, Perth Road, Bedford Mills, Chaffey's Lake (sic), Elgin, Brockville Junction, Forfar, Portland, Lombardy, Smiths Falls, Kilfoyle, Dwyer Hill, Richmond, Twin Elm Fallowfield, Merivale, Rideau Junction, Billings Bridge, Montreal Junction and Ottawa.

Friday 03/10/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

The last rail on the Canadian Northern Railway line from Ottawa to Toronto was laid yesterday and today Sir William MacKenzie, president of the road, is making a tour of inspection of the new division. He is travelling in his private car, and will probably arrive at the temporary station of the Canadian Northern Railway on Henderson Avenue some time this evening.

The new road will be opened for freight traffic in about two weeks, and it is expected that the passenger service will be inaugurated at the beginning of the new year. At first the company will probably run two express trains to Toronto each day, with possibly a third leaving at noon. It has not yet been decided what station will be used.

With the opening of the new division, the Canadian Northern, it is claimed, has the shortest route between Ottawa and Toronto.

Friday 03/10/1913 Brockville Recorder Smiths Falls

Laying of Steel between Toronto and Ottawa Completed.

Tuesday was one of the red-letter days among the officials of the C.N.R., as it marked the beginning of the end of a great enterprise - the building of a railway between the Capital of the Dominion and the Capital of the Province. That day, the laying steel was finished on the Toronto - Smiths Falls and Ottawa line, and a new link was formed between Ontario east and west. It has been watched with much interest for the past two years, and now it is nearing completion. The last gap has been closed and trains may now be run over the whole line. There are finishing touches to be put on it yet and passenger traffic is not to be inaugurated until spring, but freight trains will be running in a few weeks.

Saturday 04/10/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

Special over the new line arrived at Henderson Avenue station at 1.30 p.m.

Thursday 09/10/1913 Chesterville Record Smiths Falls Ottawa

Ottawa, October 3. The last rail of the new Canadian Northern line was laid yesterday and this afternoon the event was officially marked by the arrival of the first through train, with Sir William MacKenzie, head of the CNR system on board. Sir William arrived at 1.15 p.m. at the temporary CNR station at Henderson Avenue on the southeast corner of the city.

He was accompanied on his car by several officials of the road and the whole trip was made without accident of any kind. He expressed himself well satisfied with his inspection, although, of course, there is still much to be done before it will be in condition for regular train service.

The new route brings Ottawa and Toronto sixteen miles closer together. Yesterday the CPR was the shortest railway line between here and Toronto. It is 256 miles long. Today, the CNR, 240 miles long can claim the honor.

Sir William says that the beginning of 1914 will probably see the inception of a regular passenger service over that line between here and Toronto.

No official information regarding the building of a new station in Ottawa has been given out. The CNR may get running rights into the Central Station but nothing is known about that.

Principal advantage of the new line is the scenery.

Tuesday 14/10/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

A rumor to the effect that the Canadian Northern Railway will run its passenger trains into the Grand Trunk Central station has been started. Mr. D.B. Hanna, vice-president of the road, who is in Ottawa on business, when seen at the Chateau Laurier today, did not deny the rumor. When asked as to whether the Canadian Northern intend to erect their own station here, Mr. Hanna wanted to know what the objection was to the station we already have. "That's a fine station over there, isn't it?" he said, indicating the Central depot. That, however, was the farthest, Mr. Hanna would go toward a statement of the Canadian Northern's policy.

Wednesday 10/12/1913 Ottawa Journal Smiths Falls

Brockville - To John R. Graham, engineer, and George L. Horton, conductor, belongs the honor of making the first trip from here to Ottawa and return entirely over the tracks of the Canadian Northern Railway.

The company found it necessary to secure a gravel grader and donkey engine which had been left at the capital, and accordingly a special train made up of a locomotive and one coach left here for Ottawa. It proceeded by way of Brockville Junction; the objects of the trip were secured and Brockville was reached on the return trip in exactly seven hours.

Considering that the complete distance in each direction is 96 miles, exceptionally good time was made over a new road bed.

Mr. G.A. Mountain, chief engineer of the Railway Commission and Assistant Engineer Simmons returned this morning from an inspection of the Canadian Northern Ontario railway from Ottawa to Napanee, which has recently been completed and which is a continuation of the Toronto Napanee line. Mr. Mountain found the line to be in good condition generally and it will be opened for freight and local passenger traffic on Jan. 5. Through service will begin in the spring. Splendid steel bridges have been constructed and preparations are being made for the manning of stations along the line.

On Monday January 5 the Canadian Northern Railway will begin a local passenger and freight service over the new line between Ottawa and Toronto. As announced by Mr. S.J. Montgomery, city freight and passenger agent of the C.N.R., passengers will leave the station at the foot of Henderson avenue at 11.30 a.m. each day, connecting at Napanee with the Napanee-Toronto service at half past four in the afternoon, and arriving in Toronto at 9.15 in the evening. Returning, passengers will leave Toronto at 8 p.m., and arrive at Ottawa at noon the next day. Connections can be made at Brockville Junction for Brockville and Harrowsmith for Kingston. This is not the regular express service that the company intends running but is specially designed to give residents of towns along the line which have no train service such as Merivale, Fallowfield, Richmond, Lombardy and Portland, facilities for getting to the cities. The regular service, for which the company is now building four exceptionally fine trains, will begin next spring or summer, and a station in the centre of the city will be secured. The new freight service will allow of freight shipped from Ottawa in the morning being delivered in Toronto the next day, and means that a fast freight service will be in operation between Ottawa, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto and points east and west.

Electric Motor Installed
The new CNR Bridge at Jones' Lock is now operated by an electric motor. A 15-horse power motor has just been installed by the Canadian General Electric Company of Ottawa and was inspected and accepted last week by Mr. Carr the CNR bridge inspector. The motor will raise the bridge in a minute and a half.
New Subway
C.P.R. Gives Contract and Work Will Begin at once.

Messrs. MacDonald and Henniger of Smiths Falls were the successful tenderers for the new subway on Chambers street and have been awarded the contract by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. They are now getting their plant ready and expect to begin work in a few days. It will be remembered that the subway was ordered by the Railway Commission. It will provide a crossing under the tracks of the C.P.R. and do away with another dangerous crossing. At present there are four tracks there but the company will put three more, making seven in all. The subway will be 1050 feet in length and 36 feet wide with a walk on the north side five feet wide. It will be 14 feet below the grade level. It crosses Rideau Avenue at right angles and provision has been made for an entrance to the subway from this street level. To make this possible Rideau Avenue will be cut away 35 feet wide for a distance of 400 feet north from the subway. To make possible without destroying the houses on both sides of Chambers street, the properties on the south side between Smiths Falls Avenue and Robina Avenue have all been purchased by the company and the street will be widened. To do this all the building will be removed, including Rice's store on the corner and the tree houses alongside it. The double brick house on the south west corner of Smiths Falls Avenue will also have to come down and the two frame houses across the track to the east. Altogether seven good buildings will have to be torn down or removed and this will be done as soon as possible. When the subway is complete it will have effective a great transformation in that part of the town. All the buildings referred to will have disappeared, where they stand now the cut will be for the subway. Robbins Avenue will be closed and the railway tracks on Chambers street will be increased to seven. An Iron railing will protect the subway at each end likewise the cut on Rideau Avenue. The contract for the subway itself, it is understood, is around sixty thousand dollars but with the cost of the properties that had to be brought it will doubtless total nearly a hundred thousand dollars. Messrs MacDonald and Henniger will begin operations at once, and thus will be able to give work to about 100 men this winter when work is rather hard to get.

Wreck at Havelock
Rear End Collision Between C.P.R. Passenger Trains - Two Sleepers Smashed But Nobody Seriously Injured
People traveling from Toronto by the C.P.R. on New Year morning had an exciting experience at Havelock at two o'clock in the morning when the Ottawa express overtook and crashed into the Montreal express, which was standing at the station. The named train left Toronto at 10:30 o'clock but lost half an hour before reaching Havelock while the other one, which left Toronto at 11 o'clock, was running on time. It is said that the head train was left unprotected while waiting at Havelock. Engineer Shields of Toronto who was in charge of the Ottawa train, did not notice any danger signals and was approaching Havelock station with his train under control when he discovered the rear lights in the Montreal express just four car-lengths away. The engines was reversed and emergency brakes applied, but too late to avoid a collision, the locomotive ploughing itself fully three yards into the "dead-head" Pullmans, which were telescoped, demolishing the smoking compartments and washrooms of both sleepers and breaking nearly all the drawbars the coaches. Train Running Slow
Fortunately the train was running only ten miles an hour when the accident happened. The engineer and fireman remained at their posts and were uninjured. The sole occupants of the damaged Pullmans were two porters who were quickly rescued by the train crews. They found to be badly shaken up. The only passengers receiving minor injuries were R. Chalmers of Toronto traveling with his aged mother to Pembroke, and Mr. And Mrs. Black of Toronto en route to Ottawa. The baggageman and express messenger had narrow escape. The Ottawa train was in charge of Conductor Carmichael of Toronto and Pullman conductor Nightingale of Ottawa. Both of these officials deserve praise for their indefatigable efforts in looking after the welfare of the passengers. When Smiths Falls was reached the belated travelers were provided with refreshments at the expense of the C.P.R.

The Ottawa to Toronto section of the Canadian Northern will be in full operation next June. This was the statement of Sir William MacKenzie, president of the Canadian Northern Railway when in Ottawa today. Sir William, when questioned about the entrance of the C.N.R. into Ottawa, whether the railway would have a station of its own, or whether an arrangement would be made whereby Union station would be used, made a non-committal reply. "The arrangements made are very satisfactory." was the answer.

Page 2. First Regular Train Over the CNR Arrived Tuesday - Passenger Service About the 20th.

The first regular train over the Canadian Northern between Toronto, Smiths Falls and Ottawa arrived at Smiths Falls Tuesday at six in charge of Conductor Junk of Toronto. It stayed at Smiths Falls for a few minutes, unloaded some freight and took some on.

Mr. J.J. Gardiner has been appointed the downtown agent for the CNR and got notification of his appointment this week. The Canadian Northern Railway Company brings a new telegraph system belonging to the company and also a new express service called Canadian Northern Express Co. Although the agent is not appointed for Smiths Falls, it is expected that one will soon arrive to open business.

At present there are agents and operators at the following stations, Sydenham, Perth Road, Chaffey's, Brockville Junction, Smiths Falls, Richmond and Ottawa. There are two trains daily on the Toronto Smiths Falls and Ottawa line. One train leaves Toronto at 9 o'clock P.M. and arrives at Smiths Falls 10:30 A.M.

Another train leaves Ottawa at 7:45 in the morning and passes through Smiths Falls about 9:30.

The first shipper over the CNR lines was Mr. W. Haines, mgr. of the J. L. Haines Shoe House in Smiths Falls. The Wood Milling Company were the first to receive freight.

B. Of R. T. Ball

On Friday Jan 23rd the trainmen will hold their third annual ball. Generally this ball attracts many outsiders and this year will be no exception. The committee in charge never stops at expense to make the ball a success and every detail is arranged for the comfort of their patrons.

(Rian Manson)

Page 3 Last CNR Spike.

Sir Wm. McKenzie and party Honored at Port Arthur.

A dispatch from Port Arthur says: Sir William Mackenzie, president of the Canadian Northern Railway, and party arrived late on Thursday night after driving the last spike in the CNR at little White Otter River early in the morning. Although arriving late, the party was banqueted by the city council and the board of trade in the Prince Arthur Hotel, prominent citizens of the city attending. At the banquet, Mayor John A. Oliver presided.

Trainmen's Ball

All plans are perfected for the big ball in the town hall on Friday night of this week. It promises to be a most successful social affair.

Lombardy Notes:

Regular freight trains are now running on the CNR.

The sinkhole on the CNR near Lake Opinicon gave trouble on Friday and caused a temporary tie up in traffic. In a few hours the hole was refilled and trains were running again.

Page 5.

Annual Ball Of Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen a Great Success

Everything was joy and revelry about the town hall Friday night on the occasion of the annual ball under the patronage and direction of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. For weeks a strong committee had been planning and working for it and the results of their labors were apparent everywhere during the evening, stamping the ball as one as the largest, most successful and most enjoyable social functions of the season. The hall was very prettily decorated, a lavish use of pennants being a distinguishing feature. One very original wall decoration was an electrical device showing a railway train in motion. It was operated in the subdued light of the moon dances and was most effective. Music was excellent, the floor was in good condition, the company was congenial and the night was one of unalloyed merriment and pleasure. A splendid supper, in keeping with the excellency of all the other arrangements, was served in the Oddfellows hall by the ladies of the Methodist Hospital Auxiliary. Sleighs were provided to take the guests back and forth and in this way dancing never stopped. There were about three hundred present, and in the wee small hours of the morning as they slipped away in couples or in companies they all agreed that the ball of 1914 was the best ever.

The committee having it in charge were: Messrs. R. McGillis, T. Droughhen, J. A. Loucks, W. Flynn, D Hallman and W. H. Dart, and to them too much credit cannot be given.

Among the out-of-town guests were:

Miss Wright, Miss Wilson, Miss Floss, Miss Leach of Carleton Place, Mrs. Maxwell, Miss Rath of Kemptville.

Miss Larbarger, Moose Jaw

Miss Neil, Stittsville

Miss Poulin, Nethrall

Mrs. Stedman Craig, Mr. H. Miskelly, Winnipeg

Mr. W. Green, Havelock

Miss Jarvis, Mr. W. Boyd, Mr. R. Jenner, Montreal

Mr. Allan McGuirl, Mr. James Wright, Ottawa

Miss Reeves, Eganville

Miss Delaney, Prescott

Miss Ethel and Cora Smith, Miss M. Courtney, Miss Murray, Miss Denning, Mr. A. Cole, Mr. Roy Denning, Perth

Trouble With Sinkholes

The sinkhole on the C.N.R. at Lake Opinicon has been giving lots of trouble since regular traffic was opened but the work of filling it is almost complete and it was expected to have it ready to carry trains today. The filling of the hole disappeared as fast as it was dumped in and a whole mountain of rock and earth and gravel was poured into it. Finally it held and the rails were laid, but as soon as traffic over it began the bottom fell out of it again and more filling became necessary. For the past couple of weeks freight had been transferred at this place so that traffic might not be held up. It was fixed up to carry a car at a time but it would not carry the big engines and so they ran to the sinkhole from each direction but did not cross. Cars of freight were sent over and trains were made up on each side of the hole. It is thought a good bottom has been found now however and trains were expected to go over today. The C.P.R. has also a similar experience on its new lakeshore line at Sucker Lake. It is reported now that the trouble there has also been overcome and the sinkhole filled.

A strong deputation went to Ottawa this morning to interview Colonel the Honorable S. Hughes in regard to an armories for the town. Others went to see the Minister of Railways and Canals about a grant for the bridge and other things.

Giving More Trouble

For the second Sunday in succession the sinkhole on the C.N.R. near Lake Opinicon settled beneath the tracks. On Sunday of the last week it went down about seven feet and traffic across was obstructed for a couple of days. The sinkhole at this point is causing considerable anxiety to the engineers and the managements, and it is feared that in the spring when the ice goes out the entire work will settle. The embankment is about 160 feet long and is across an arm of the lake so that position is extremely dangerous.

31/03/1914 Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

A Russian laborer named Kurakwich brought an action against J. P. Mularkey, contractor for the building of the C.N.R. line between Smiths Falls and Toronto, for damages for injuries sustained while at work on the line at Perth Road last summer. He was awarded \$650.00 and costs.

16/04/1914 Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

Temporary Passenger Service

In response to numerous requests from the traveling public for some accommodation over the recently completed Canadian Northern line between Napanee and Ottawa, the company is operating a passenger coach on freight trains No. 93 and 94 which leaves Smiths Falls going east at one o'clock, arriving in Ottawa at 4:00 p.m.; returning, leave Ottawa at 9:00 a.m. arriving Smiths Falls at one o'clock p.m. This service is daily except Mondays and began on Thursday the 9th. Inst. Details of the full passenger service may be obtained from any C.N.R. agent. The temporary service will prove a great convenience to those residing at intermediate points and to the general public.

16/04/1914 Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

Motor Service On C.N.R.

Daily Fast Schedule to be Put into Effect for Benefit of Cottagers at Rideau Lakes.

That the Canadian Northern will run a motor service from Ottawa to Rideau Lakes to accommodate the summer visitors to that beautiful district is probable. The matter is at present under the consideration of the management of that railway.

The C.N.R. touches the Rideau first at a point midway between Hog's Back and Black Rapids. There are many cottages in that vicinity and a number of campers. The Railway then runs via Richmond to Smiths Falls by the most direct route, then crosses the Rideau and straight across to Portland, one of the most beautiful spots on the Big Rideau Lakes. The next point on the system of lakes is Chaffey's Locks.

The proposal is to run a fast motor service over the line morning and evening. The whole journey from Ottawa to Portland can be made in 1 1-2 hour.

Hitherto Ottawa men whose families spend the summer on the lakes, are only able to be with them week-ends. By this arrangement, if the C.N.R. gets enough support to carry out, they will be able to make the trip daily.

21/04/1914 Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

Council Meeting excerpts

Notice of meeting of Railway Commission at Ottawa on the 5th of May when an application would be considered from the C.N.R.y Co. to connect its line of railway with the C.P.R. and to connect a siding to the Malleable Castings Co. with the C.P.R.

05/05/1914 Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

First Through Train

The first through train over the C.N.R. line from Quebec to Toronto arrived at Smiths Falls last Thursday afternoon at 3:30 o'clock carrying 499 passengers, all immigrants from the steamer Royal George. Attached to the train was a private car containing several of the officials of the company.

It is the first time that immigrants or others were conveyed from Britian to Toronto exclusively by the C.N.R.

The run was made in good time considering that the road is new. The entire road was satisfactory to the officials, and the regular through traffic will start in the early summer.

The immigrants, about half of whom were for Toronto, appreciated the honor they had in being the first to pass over the new railway. They were given souvenirs.

12/05/1914 Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

Council Meeting excerpts

"The members of the Council of the Board of Trade were present with Messers. Shaw and Fairburn representing the C.N.R. The two latter gentlemen said that the Railway Commission had disallowoed the interswitching of the two lines of railway here and they wanted the Council to send a petition to the Railway Commission asking that interswitching be granted. Messers. A. B. Scott and J. E. Ruby members of the Board of Trade also spoke on the matter, the latter emphasizing the fact that the C.N.R. would not be much goodto the Frost & Wood business unless interswitching was allowed as there would be too much hauling.

A motion afterwards made by Alderman Gould seconded by Alderman Ridgewood. "That we learn with surprise that the Board of Railway Commissioners refused to grant the application of the C.N.R. for interswitching privileges with the C.P.R. at this point in accordance with the plans and specifications submitted to and approved by the council. That it is in the interest of Smiths Falls that this application should be granted in order that shipping facilities at this place be put on the same basis as at other places. It is therefore the desire of this Council that the application be granted and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Board of Railway Commissioners. " Carried.

The farmers of this country are a long suffering people. They will stand by and see the Borden Government give further aid of \$45,000,000 to a railway, which has already had assistance from the public treasury of \$214,000,000 while they are refused a single dollar for good roads in the country.

Neither the town council nor the Board of Trade should stay their hands until the Dominion Railway Commissiors have made an order providing for interswitching facilities between the C. P. R. and the C. N. R. at Smiths Falls. The action of the commission in deferring such an order at its meeting a week ago is a great surprise to the business and manufacturing firms of the town, as it was taken for granted that the nessesary arrangements for interchange of traffic would be made as soon as the new line was ready.

Special Summer Service

The C.N.R. will establish a special daily summer service over their new line between Ottawa and Chaffeys. The company has been quietly carrying on an investigation of the Rideau lakes to determine their possibilities as a summer resort and it is understood that it has received such favorable reports that it will include in its plans the making of a great play ground that shall outrival the Muskoka lakes district. Nothing has been officially given out about it by the company yet but big plans are said to be in the making and 1915 will in all likelihood see the carrying out of many of them. Meantime a beginning will be made on Saturday of this week by putting on a daily service each way between Ottawa and Chaffeys. The train will consist of one large coach drawn by a gas electric engine, of which a cut is given herewith. There are only two of these gas electric trains in use in Canada and the one on this run will be quite a novelty. It will run on the following schedule beginning on Saturday:

LeaveChaffeysAt6:10a.m.

"Portland"6:37" "

"Lombardy"7:00" "

"Smiths Falls"7:17" "

ArriveOttawa"9:00" "

Returning

LeaveOttawaAt5:15p.m.

"Smiths Falls"7:00" "

"Lombardy"7:17" "

"Portland"7:40" "

ArriveChaffeys"8:25" "

On Saturdays the above schedule will be varied by the train leaving Ottawa at 2 o'clock instead of 5:15 and Smiths Falls at 3:45 instead of 7:15. Aside from tourist traffic, this train should be a good thing for Smiths Falls. It will stop at all stations and will also make connections both ways at Brockville Junctions for Westport and Newboro. In this way it will make all that country tributary to Smiths Falls and within easy reach of it.

First Train

The first regular passenger train over the C.N.R. began running on Saturday, arriving here at 3:45 o'clock in the afternoon. It consisted of one large coach drawn by a gas electric engine and makes a fine train for summer service. It will run daily except Sundays between Ottawa and Chaffey's.

Civic Problems. Considered by Council - Armory Site Discussed But No Agreement Reached - The Committee's Report Rejected - Exerpts

"From Mr. M. G. Henniger offering sixteen town lots each 80X120ft. fronting on James Street between James and John streets and abutting the property of the C. N. O. Ry. For the sum of \$225.00 per lot or \$3600.00 in all."

"From Daniel Street at the old railway station which combined, would make a site in size about 150x250 ft. for a total of \$13,400.00."

"The Henniger property, consisting of sixteen town lots each 60x120ft. in size equals two and two-third acres and as it is bisected by a blind end of Mary Street 240x66 feet this street could be closed and added to the property without cost to the town. This would give a total of about three acres of land all in one block with streets on three sides and only three blocks to the westward on Church Street (1200 ft) from the Town Hall. Part of his property has heretofore been wet in Spring time but the fill which has been and is being made on the C. N. O. Ry. Property combined with the drainage of the new sewer at present under construction will remove this objection and if it were taken over by the Department the whole property would be improved and built up."

Letter to the editor of the Rideau Record

Dear Sir - Allow me a little space in your paper to express a view on the drill shed site.

Not doubt a great many people who do not know the Henniger site to take it for granted that because some of the councilors call it a bog hole, it must be so. I will grant you that the spring of the year it is wet, but if the town buys the site up to the Government to fill it in to brake the land high enough for them to put up a \$60,000 building. Would it not be a good thing to get this rather low land filled in, was it not a good thing for the town that the C. N. R. chose this same part of town for their station, have they not improved their property? Will the Government not improve their property because it will be Government property? Mr.

Editor, lots within 100 yards of the Henniger site are held at \$600 a lot, two very substantial brick houses have been put up within the last year within 100 yards of this site. The price \$225.00 a lot that Mr. Henniger is asking is not a big price when others are asking \$600.

This is the Government's second choice, let us close the deal and have our armory built as soon as possible. Let us not lose sight of the fact that this site is only 1300 feet from the town hall and next door neighbor to the C. N. R. station. Thanking you Mr. Editor for this space and hoping soon to see this \$60,000 building added to our town. A Tax Payer.

Interesting Steamship Exhibit

There is now on view in the Canadian Northern Railway's station in Smiths Falls an interesting model of their well known Atlantic steamships.

This was made in 1910 especially for the Canadian Northern Steamships Limited by the builders, the famous firm of the Fairfield Shipbuilding Company, Govan, Glasgow Scotland at a cost of \$5,000.

Twelve and a half feet long and over six feet high, the model is built to scale and is strictly accurate in every small detail in view from the rigger to the deck equipment, so that an exact idea can formed of the character of vessels.

The Canadian Northern Steamships Royal Edward and Royal George are each 445 feet in length with a beam 65 feet and a moulded depth of 28 feet.

They have a passenger capacity for 300 people in the first class, 250 in the second class and 520 in the third. For the first and second classes there are promenade and bridge decks a quarter of a mile in extent, while for the third class there are large areas forward and aft on the saloon deck and on the aft portion of the bridge deck. The speed record of the Royal Line is as follows:

The Royal Edward, summer voyage Bristol to Quebec - 5 days 20 hours.

Winter voyage, Bristol to Halifax 5 days, 16 hours.

Royal George runs 3 days, 19 hours, voyage from Montreal. This is the fastest run ever accomplished on the Canadian route.

Abandon Rideau Junction as a switching point and likely as a divisional point.

Another result of the amalgamation of C.N.R and Grand Trunk.

Too far from Ottawa - Men Released to be rehired.

As a result of the amalgamation of the Canadian National and Grand Trunk Railway lines, Rideau Junction will be abandoned as a switching terminal and will probably be abandoned as a divisional centre. Definite announcement that the switching of the Canadian National trains would in future be transferred to the yards at Hurdman's Bridge was made to the Journal this morning by Chief Clerk, J.D. Rowe, of the C.N.R. While no announcement has been made as to the abandonment of the junction as a divisional centre of C.N.R. but on Saturday about 150 trackmen and foremen who had been engaged in repairing the line there, were paid off and informed that their services would probably be required in the near future to remove some of the tracking in the extensive yards at that point. Established six years ago.

Rideau Junction was established as a divisional centre by the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway about six years ago upon the completion of the Toronto-Ottawa line. At this point the main line of the Montreal-Ottawa, Pembroke-North Bay line branches off and the site was ideal at the time for the C.N.R as an independent line.

Transfer Switching Point

With the amalgamation on June 27 of the C.N.R. and G.T.R., and the unification of the two lines, it was found necessary to transfer the switching point nearer the main yards at Central Station. As Rideau Junction is seven and one tenth miles from the station and has no connecting lines with the former G.T.R. tracks to make it practicable to continue its use, the decision was reached to abandon it for switching purposes. Whether the roundhouse will still be used has not been definitely decided, but it is likely the entire plant will be dismantled with the exception of the station and freight sheds.

Rideau Junction is just west of the Rideau River in Nepean Township and about six miles from the centre of the city. With the establishment of the C.N.R. divisional point there a townsite was planned and a suburban centre sprang up. This was accompanied by considerable activity in real estate circles, many Ottawa people purchasing lots in the vicinity. To relieve the housing situation at Rideau Junction a number of old freight cars were dismantled and the interiors rebuilt into homes for railway employees and their families.

Will be absorbed

Mr. Rowe stated this morning that the dismissal of the trackmen and foremen at Rideau Junction was but a matter of form and that they would all likely work on the National Railways.

07/07/1921

Ottawa Journal

Smiths Falls

CNR announced that it would run a special train from Forfar to Ottawa on July 12th for the local Orangemen

Tuesday

22/05/1922

Ottawa Journal

Smiths Falls

CNR inaugurates a 'Stag' sleeping car on its overnight Ottawa-Toronto trains via Napanee.

This was added as the male passengers were complaining that the women's restrooms were often occupied by females for an extended period of time in the morning, meaning that the men had only one lavatory at the other end of the car, and there was often a waiting line to get in, resulting in people alighting from the overnight train at Toronto at a very late hour. And this hampered switching operations at Toronto Union as well. Now this extra sleeping car would have both ends of the car in use by only the male occupants of this 'stag' car.

Tuesday

07/09/1926

Ottawa Journal

Smiths Falls

Chaffey's Locks

Several hundred passenger, most of whom were sleeping, received a shaking up this morning at 5.05 am when Canadian National train No. 8 from Toronto ran into a fall of rock which had slid onto the track at Chaffey's Locks.

The train was making around 30 miles an hour at the time and, due to the darkness, the obstacle on the track could not be seen until the engineer was upon it. The pony trucks of the engine went off the track and the pilot was severely damaged, a new engine having to be sent out from Ottawa to bring the train in.

More

A delay occurred of about an hour and finally the engine was enabled to proceed very slowly as far as Smiths Falls where a new engine, No. 5105 from Ottawa, which had been wired for, was hooked on and the train made fast time into the city arriving at 10.30 standard time.

Monday

18/07/1927

Ottawa Journal

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield

Derailment near Fallowfield station.

Friday

09/04/1937

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Second attempt to derail train.

News of a second attempt to derail the C.N.R. "mixed" train near Smiths Falls on Tuesday night was made public here tonight by Constable Ray Morden of Lindsay who is here investigating the incident. According to reports, the attempt was unsuccessful, the engine pilot brushing aside boulders on the track.

Constable Morden declared a mitten found near the scene and small footprints indicated that the small boulders had been piled across the right-of-way by small boys. The investigation is continuing.

An attempt to derail the train was made some two weeks ago when two ties were propped across the track but on this occasion too, the engine pilot brushed the obstruction aside. The C.N.R. and local police investigated and three transients were arrested.

Thursday

26/12/1940

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Alton Beckett Killed as Train Hits Sleigh.

Alton beckett, 58, of 170 Drummond street, farm hand in the employ of Thomas E. Nesbitt, City View, was killed instantly at 11.40 a.m. on Tuesday when a horse-drawn sleigh he was driving was struck by an eastbound C.N.R transcontinental train on a side road off the Merivale road at City View. The train was travelling at about 60 miles an hour at the time of the accident.

The body was taken to the parlors of Hulse and Playfair Limited, 315 McLeod street, where an inquest was opened last night by Dr. J.S. Nelson, coroner, of Westboro. The inquest was adjourned until January 3 and will be held at Nepean town hall, Westboro.

Mr. Beckett, who had only been working on the Nesbitt farm for about six weeks, was making his daily trip across the C.N.R. main line when his sleigh was struck by the fast-moving train. He was wearing a cap with earflaps on it which is believed to have deadened the sound of the approaching train. The sleigh was reduced to matchwood and the unfortunate man was struck with terrific violence. His mangled body was caught in the front part of the engine and carried more than 1,200 feet before the train could be brought to a stop. He suffered multiple fractures of the skull and not a bone on his left side was unbroken.

Horses Escape.

Two horses which were pulling the sleigh had a remarkable escape. They had crossed the tracks when the sleigh was struck. One of them suffered a slight cut while the other was unhurt. The frightened animals broke loose when the sleigh was struck and stampeded into the yard at the Nesbitt farm. Their return to the farm was the first warning the Nesbitt household had of the accident.

Three C.N.R. section men, James McLean, Raymond Bernie and Charles Giroux, were working about a mile east on the railway tracks at the time. They heard the crash and ran to the scene of the accident.

The body was released from the front of the engine by the train crew and later taken to the parlors of Hulse and Playfair, Lts., after it had been viewed by the district coroner. The train was not long delayed and had proceeded on its way to Union station when the coroner and police arrived. Provincial Constable Thomas Hazlitt investigated.

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Thursday 15/10/1942 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Billings Bridge

At 9 o'clock last night, Wednesday 14 October 1942, two CNR freight trains had a spectacular head-on collision just west of the steel trestle over the Metcalfe Road at Billings Bridge. One of the trains was transporting some forty horses for the army. At the point of impact, the two freight trains carrying the horses took a tumbling dive down the 85-foot embankment. Six crew members on the train were injured.

Paul Boisvenue, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alphonse Boisvenue, was returning home along the muddy dark road at the foot of the embankment, had to run to get out of the way of horses and big pieces of lumber that were falling around him. "I told my mother what had happened and she, together with her guests, Mrs. L. Lavigne, Mrs. H. Taillon, Miss Eva Brule and neighbours Mr. Alexis Brule and Mr. and Mrs. Edouard Brule were the first to arrive at the scene of the accident. Mistery Alexis Brule and Paul Boisvenue played a hurculean part in helping to free what horses were left alive in the overturned cars. A total of twenty horses were either killed outright or had to be destroyed after the crash.

Wednesday 26/04/1944 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

Mrs. William Tate, Elgin, Ont., was killed instantly and three persons were seriously injured at about six o'clock this evening when the car in which they were riding was struck by an Ottawa bound C.N.R. train at a level crossing on the south west outskirts of Smiths Falls.

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Saturday 22/06/1963 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

Man injured in crossing accident.

A Gatineau Point man was injured Thursday evening when the truck he was driving was hit by a CNR special train loaded with children at the Woodroffe Avenue crossing in Manordale, Nepean Township.

Cleridan Ethier, 56, of 14 St. Thomas St., Gatineau Point, is in Ottawa Civic Hospital with a broken nose, broken bones in his left foot and bruises.

He was driving a loaded gravel truck owned by J.P. Chenier Co. Ltd., of 1057 Merivale Rd. towards Ottawa when the accident occurred on County Road 43, an extension of Woodroffe Avenue.

Although no passengers were injured, one passenger coach was damaged and had to be taken off the train. The coach was filled with school children bound for Toronto.

The train was delayed almost two hours.

The crossing has no crossing signals but is marked with wooden signs. Police say Mr. Ethier told them he simply did not see the train coming. The accident happened when it was still light, around 7 p.m.

The ditches along the railway track were littered with debris, including large pieces torn from the truck. The three-ton truck was demolished.

Constables Fred Gardiner and Guy Cromie of the Gloucester-Nepean police investigated.

Monday 26/04/1971 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

Picture shows a mail truck loaded with bags of mail, and staffers with signs denoting end of an era, and titled: 'A mail bag and the end of an era'

Railway mail clerks hold impromptu ceremony to mark end of mail trains.

The mail train doesn't stop here any more.

By Matt Hart Citizen staff writer

Most post offices don't sway, bounce, lurch, jerk or scream around curves. In fact, most just sit there like a good post office should.

So it wasn't always that way. At one time, the best training for a certain type of mail clerk was trying to sort letters while jumping up and down on a trampoline being dragged over a rough road.

Sound rather hairy? It was.

But those were the sort of conditions that coloured the daily existence of an elite band known as railway mail clerks.

As late as 1952, the post office operated 177 rolling post offices across Canada, employing 1,368 clerks. It was the clerks' task to sort mail en route between various points.

And the problem? When the train lurches, so does the sorting rack nailed to the floor.

But the clerks were the envied few. Their exams were tougher than those of the regular mail clerks. They were the "crème de la crème", if you will, as opposed to the skim milk that stayed behind.

Alas, no longer.

The post office has decided to eliminate the service for economic reasons, and the palace guard will be going on duty in the stables.

At 6:35 a.m. Saturday, April 24th, 1971, the last mobile unit rolled into Ottawa Station from Toronto, and tossed out its mail, its clerks and 117 years' worth of nostalgia.

What the clerks will miss most is the relative absence of supervision on the runs. Sure, there were the occasional inspections, but, you know, when one has friends in the main office . . .

And where else would one find mail clerks setting their tables with linen and exquisite silver? Or carrying attache cases with the ingredients for martinis and singapore slings? Not at the corner of Alta Vista Drive and Industrial Avenue, that's for sure.

And that's where the 13 clerks from the Toronto-Ottawa run will be working from now on.

And the nicknames! Holy Zappata! Most you couldn't print. A mild example name for the train between Halifax, Bridgewater and Yarmouth --known fondly as "Hellish, Slow and Wobbly."

But that's finished for good now. The mail service may still be hellish and slow, but it won't be wobbly.

Thursday 05/12/1974 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Twin Elm

A 39-year-old manotick man was seriously injured Wednesday when the truck he was driving was hit by a passenger train in Nepean Township.

John Scobie of Rideau Valley Drive, had just delivered fuel oil to a private home and was driving north on a private road when the accident occurred, a quarter-mile east of the Twin Elm crossing near Richmons Road

Police said Mr. Scobie drove his truck onto the track in front of the westbound Ottawa to Brockville passenger train.

The engineer jammed on the emergency brake but could not avoid hitting the truck.

He was taken to Civic Hospital and was reported in fair condition with head and abdominal injuries, facial lacerations and fractured ribs. No one on the six-car train was injured.

Railway buffs organize to keep station whole.

Railway buffs from Perth, Merrickville and Brockville have joined ranks with local enthusiasts in their battle to save the CN Station here.

They've formed the Smiths Falls Railway Museum Association.

President of the newly formed group is Bill LeSurf, chamber of commerce manager, who has spearheaded the Save Our Station Appeal to save the building from demolition.

Smiths Falls lawyer Hugh McLain was named secretary-treasurer. Committee members include Dr. Robert V. Nicholls, president of the Canadian Railway Historical Association and director of the Canadian Historical Society, Clare Garrod of the chamber of commerce; Smiths Falls; Smiths Falls collegiate principal Robin Fraser; artist Craig Campbell; Perth restaurateur Fred Bannon; and Brockville Tunnel Bay Railroaders Club executives S.H. Galloway and Steve Hunter. First priority will be to persuade Smiths Falls council to assume ownership of the doomed building. Dr. Nicholls warned the meeting that as soon as the structure is declassified as a non-operating station by the Canadian Transport Commission, the wrecking crew could move in within 24 hours.

LeSurf planned to contact CN officials to attempt to get a stop order on the demolition of the building.

The first fund-raising project will be a draw for a painting of the station by Craig Campbell.

The Tunnel Bay Railroaders said they have given up hope of having a railway museum on Brockville because of lack of space, so they're joining the Smiths Falls group.

Bannon, owner of Noonan's restaurant in Perth, has offered the committee the original blueprints of the station plus an architect's proposal for turning it into a restaurant. Bannon has been unsuccessfully trying to negotiate a deal with CN for the past four years to buy the station for a restaurant.

With picture.

Sabotage suspected in train derailment.

Police are looking at sabotage as a possible cause of a train derailment in Nepean Thursday night that sent 27 passengers to hospital with minor injuries. The LRC "super train" on the evening run from Toronto to Ottawa was sidetracked on to a dead-end spur line in a Nepean lumber yard as it slowed on its approach to Ottawa.

Investigators are trying to determine how a padlocked railway switch was opened Thursday evening, diverting the VIA Rail train on to the side track.

Police said today that someone with access to a CN railway switching key apparently opened the switch on the spur line leading into the Kott Lumber yard sometime Thursday evening. There was no signs that the padlock had been forced.

The train's engineer spotted the open switch and immediately put on his brakes but the four-car train went on to the spur line and ploughed into three flat-bed cars.

Police said if the flat bed cars, including one loaded with lumber, had not been there the LRC (Light, Rapid, Comfortable) locomotive and some of the four passenger cars would have landed in the Jock River.

The last train passing over the closed switch went through safely at 4.50 p.m. The accident occurred at 10.45 p.m.

CN official Bruno Leroux said it's possible that someone without CN authorization may have gotten the keys. Only CN trainmen and section foremen have access to the keys.

Leroux said cleanup operations will take the rest of day.

The front of the locomotive was embedded in the flat cars. None of the passenger cars turned over but some were partially off tracks.

Canadian Transport Commission investigators and police are trying to find out how the padlocked switch was opened, putting the LRC train on to the siding. There were about 85 passengers on the train. Twenty-seven were taken to three hospitals for treatment of cuts and bruises and were released.

A modified version of the region's year-old hospital disaster plan was put into action for the first time.

A first-of-its-kind instrument installed last October that connects all the region's hospitals on a special radio frequency was switched on at the regional ambulance dispatch centre.

"It really helped us tremendously," said Gerry Savoie, assistant executive-director at Queensway-Carleton Hospital and head of the hospitals' disaster plan for the last three years.

"We had at least 20 minutes' notice before any patients arrived."

Seventeen injured passengers were treated at Queensway-Carleton. Savoie said because the hospital had warning and the accident happened just as shifts changed, extra staff were kept on, allowing the hospital to accommodate the extra patients smoothly.

The new radio system also allowed all the other hospitals in the region to keep up-to-date with how the situation was being handled and to communicate with Queensway-Carleton.

Savoie said he was very pleased with how the plan worked and said it shows regional hospitals are prepared to handle a larger disaster.

Only one person, thought to be a woman in her 50s, had to be taken off the train on a stretcher. She apparently suffered back injuries.

About 60 uninjured passengers were taken to the CN station by four OC Transpo buses.

Spokesmen for the CTC, CN and Via Rail said that neither reconstruction work on the rail line nor the locomotive that ran the five-unit train were factors in the derailment.

CNR officials on the scene refused to answer reporters' questions.

"When we're allowed to release any information, we'll give it to you and nothing more," said one of the officials, who refused to identify himself.

The official threatened to have Nepean police throw reporters off the Kott Lumber Company property.

But one of the passengers, Ed Kulbida of Saskatoon, a trainman, said he had heard that a switch to a sidetrack was locked open, directing the train onto the spur line.

Kulbida estimated the speed of the train at about 70 km/h.

Nepean firemen were on the scene, but Fire Chief Keith Davidson said there was no danger of fire.

The engine, which came to a halt about 10 metres from a building on the Kott lot, was dented at the front when it struck a lone boxcar filled with lumber. The lumber was strewn about the yard.

Passenger Kay Wisn of Halifax, who suffered cuts to her legs, said there was no warning.

"I just went on the floor. There was a grinding noise and that was all."

Afterward, she noticed many passengers lying on the floor nursing minor cuts and bruises.

"There was no advance warning," said John Tilton, of Mississauga.

"All I know is that I was thrown across the aisle and I ended up on the floor with a cut eye and a cut chin."

Jennifer Barrett, 24, was travelling to Ottawa for a job interview. She was sleeping when the accident occurred.

"All of a sudden I felt the train shaking, and then it was over and my car was on a slant," she said.

"I was a little nervous at first, but then everything seemed to be under control."

Steward Ahmed Mokrane was standing in the aisle collecting dishes and cleaning up in preparation for the train's arrival in Ottawa.

"I jumped in between two seats when the train started to shake and then there was a loud boom and the lights went out," he said.

Second Story.

Train wreck could have been avoided

A saboteur and a \$1,000 switch protected by a \$20 padlock are at the root of Thursday night's \$2-million train wreck in Nepean.

Someone unlocked the switch, without damaging the lock, then locked it again after shifting it to steer the train onto a dead-end siding.

The switch has a signal a round piece of reflecting red metal that turns to face oncoming trains when the switch is moved but it wasn't visible until the train was too close for the engineer to stop it before entering the siding. A Canadian Transport Commission investigator said Friday an electronic warning system used on more heavily-travelled tracks would have given the engineer ample warning.

But the track on which the VIA train from Toronto to Ottawa derailed, sending 27 people to hospital with minor injuries, is not used enough to warrant the multi-million dollar investment in such signals, said investigator Alex Kocsis.

The Toronto-Ottawa line only has the electronic system between Nepean's eastern edge and Ottawa station that stretch is part of CN's centralized traffic control, which uses a computer and dispatcher to direct switching from the station.

CN dispatcher Mike Mongeon, said with the computerized system, any change to a switch would show up in the central dispatch and he could radio a warning to the train.

Light signals on the track would also automatically flash red, warning the train engineer, Mongeon said.

The last train passing over the switch involved in the accident went through safely at 4:50 p.m. The accident occurred at 10:45.

Switching onto industrial spurs on the Ottawa-Toronto line west of Ottawa is done manually by a crew member. The manual switches simply push a piece of rail one way or another to steer the wheels of trains passing through.

Kocsis said the train driver saw the red reflector attached to the switch, indicating the track was directed onto the industrial spur, but by then it was too late to stop.

Red means the switch is not tied to the main line. But a train as not like a car. With the steel wheels going on the steel track at 80 km/h it takes at least a quarter of a mile to stop. And he just didn't have a quarter of a mile."

There are only six passenger trains a day on the track where the accident occurred and it wasn't economically feasible for the railroads to install the system.

There are 52 trains daily using the Montreal-Toronto line, he said.

It comes down to economics. It costs money to install and money to maintain an electronic switching system, Kocsis said. Canadian National spokesman Rene

Chappaz said Friday the padlock was placed back on the switch in a way contrary to CN operating procedures. "It does not appear that that the switch was opened through an error by a CN employee." CN official Bruno Leroux said it's possible that someone without CN authorization has the keys. Only CN trainmen and section foremen are supposed to have them.

Nepean police Insp. Wayne Phillips said Friday: "It is obvious that somebody tampered with a switching device that diverted the train onto a spur line. We have some leads and we are following them."

Phillips said someone got at the switch controls either by having the key necessary to open a padlock or by opening it through some other means. Travelling about 80 km/h, the normal speed for trains passing through the switch, the train tore up more than 60 metres of track. The new Light, Rapid, Comfortable locomotive and four passenger cars plowed into three flatbed freight cars in the Kott Lumber Company yard on Moodie Drive. The freight cars stopped the train before it landed in the Jock River.

The force of the impact crumpled the front end of the \$2 million locomotive and heavily damaged the wheels and underbody of it and some of the cars. The passenger cars were extensively damaged inside, too. The CTC and police investigation is expected to take more than a month.

The switch at the Kott spur line had last been opened Wednesday morning, when the freight cars were delivered, officials said. It must have been closed again, though, because numerous trains passed through since.

The CN line was expected to be reopened this morning. CN trains used CPR lines Friday. There were about 85 passengers on the train.

Saturday 06/06/1985 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Moodie Drive

The 17-year old Richmond man charged in the \$2-million derailment of a VIA train last June has been committed to trial.

Randy Rankin will appear in district court May 3 to set a date for trial.

Rankin was charged after a VIA train on the Ottawa-Toronto line derailed, sending 27 people to hospital with minor injuries.

He is charged with interfering with a transportation facility.

09/05/1986 Globe and Mail Smiths Falls

TENDERS CALLED FOR LINE DISMANTLING: Canadian National is inviting bids for the dismantling and salvaging of approximately 36.3 miles of part of the abandoned portion of its Smiths Falls Subdivision (Ontario) between Chaffeys Locks (mileage 63.0) and Strathcona (mileage 99.30). Rumour has it that the rail will be re-used in branch line rehabilitation work in western Canada.

No word has been received on the eventual disposition of the remainder of the abandoned section which runs between a point just south of the Smiths Falls station and Chaffeys Lock. Sources confirm, however, that the Rideau Valley Division of the CRHA is negotiating with CN to acquire it for the purposes of setting up a tourist train operation. (Branchline)

13/09/1986 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Jock River

JAIL TERM FOR DERAILING TRAIN:

A 19-year old Kanata (Ontario) man was sent to jail for two years less a day, and placed on probation for another 3 years after being found guilty of causing the May 1984 derailment of VIA train No. 46.

The derailment took place after the man opened a track switch on a siding into a lumber company, sending the four car train crashing into three empty bulkhead flat cars. But for the cars, the train would probably have gone down the siding and ended up in the Jock River, immediately to the east of the end of the siding.

Damage to the train was estimated at \$2.25 million and 27 passengers were taken to hospital. The man derailed the train in order to take revenge upon the lumber company for previously firing him.

At the time, the accident sparked intense calls for a review of passenger train operating practises in Canada, resulting in new rules with respect to operating high speed trains in non-signalled territory and in the equipping of main line turn-outs with safety locks instead of the normal switch lock.

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15/10/1986 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Smiths Falls

MUSEUM SPUR IN JEOPARDY: The worst has happened. The Railway Transport Committee has allowed Canadian National to abandon that portion of its Smiths Falls Subdivision between Smiths Falls East (mileage 34.5) and Smiths Falls Station, home of the Rideau Valley Division of the CRHA, (mileage 35.3). The decision was handed down on October 14, 1986.

The action clears the way for the removal of two bridges which carry CP Rail's Chalk River and Belleville Subdivisions over the subject trackage and their replacement with fill material. Under the terms of an agreement between Canadian Pacific and the Canadian Northern Railway which built the Smiths Falls Sub., the Canadian Northern, and its successor, was responsible for the maintenance of the bridges. CN will therefore be spared the expense of replacing the bridges (estimated to cost \$772,000) in favour of an earth fill embankment costing only \$157,000.

The decision could not have come at a worse time for the Rideau Valley Division. As mentioned in last month's issue of Branchline, the removal of the bridges will cut off rail access to the the group's museum operation based out of the former Canadian National Station in Smiths Falls. This matter was considered by the Railway Transport Committee. The RTC concluded, however, that the cost of retaining the line just to guarantee the museum's rail link was not in the public interest. Unless an alternate solution can be found, the group's plans to set up a tourist train operation between Smiths Falls and Chaffeys Locks over a portion of the previously abandoned, but not dismantled, Smiths Falls Sub. will be placed in severe jeopardy.

As mentioned in last month's issue, the Rideau Valley Division must now work actively to convince CP Rail to construct a connecting track between the west end of its Smiths Falls Yard and the erstwhile Smiths Falls Subdivision. (Branchline)

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Ottawa Citizen

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31/10/1986

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

TENDER CALLED FOR BRIDGE REMOVAL: Canadian National has requested tenders for the removal of the bridges carrying CP Rail's Chalk River and Belleville Subdivisions (Smiths Falls, Ontario) over mileage 34.28 of the former's Smiths Falls Subdivision. The bridges would be replaced with approximately 5,000 cubic metres of fill material as well as a corrugated metal culvert pipe.

The move comes hard upon the heels of a recent CTC decision authorizing CN to abandon that portion of the Smiths Falls Subdivision, including the bridges in question, between Smiths Falls East and Smiths Falls Station, (mileage 35.3).

Unless measures can be taken to ensure that the corrugated culvert pipe is of a sufficient size to allow for the passage of trains through it, the bridge removal and associated work will have the effect of eliminating the present rail connection now enjoyed by the Rideau Valley Division of the CRHA which hopes to set up a tourist train operation out of the former CN station in Smiths Falls.

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07/02/1991

Globe and Mail

Smiths Falls

VIA buys portion of Toronto route.

VIA Rail Canada and Canadian National have reached an agreement with respect to the passenger rail corporation purchasing that portion of CN's Smiths Falls subdivision between Richmond and Smiths Falls. CN had earlier received permission to abandon the line effective February 1992.

The move is precedent setting in that this is the first occasion for VIA to own main line trackage. Aside from yards, it does own the right-of-way of Canadian Pacific's former M&O subdivision between Rigaud, Quebec and Ottawa. The latter route has been set aside as an eventual high speed rail corridor.

31/03/1993

Rideau Record

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

The Smiths Falls Railway Museum has received a \$58,000 grant from the Community Features Committee of Lanark/Leeds and Grenville Counties. The money comes following an earlier federal government injection, also \$58,000. (Branchline).

27/07/1993

Brockville Recorder

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

DISPLAY TRAIN TO BE RELOCATED TO SMITHS FALLS RAILWAY

MUSEUM: The St. Lawrence Parks Commission has announced that it will be transferring the locomotive and rolling stock now on display in Chrysler Park (near Morrisburg, Ontario) to the Smiths Falls Railway Museum.

The railway equipment includes CN Mogul No. 88 (CLC April 1910, as Grand Trunk No. 1008); Wooden Baggage Car No. 11562, ex-CN No. 8851 (Pullman 1920) and Wooden Coach No. 3474, ex-Grand Trunk (Pullman 1890).

The equipment sits on a portion of the former Cornwall Subdivision - which was abandoned to make way for the St. Lawrence Seaway - directly in front of the preserved Aultsville, Ontario, Station. Aultsville was another casualty of the flooding associated with the construction of the Seaway during the late-1950s.

The locomotive and coach were delivered to the site in 1958 with the baggage car being added during the late-1960s.

The Commission wants to get rid of the locomotive and rolling stock because its budget has been restricted to the point where it can no longer afford to keep the equipment in suitable condition. The station, which is completely restored, will remain in-situ and may become either a tourist outlet for the Commission or a base for the Lost Villages Historical Society, which represents the villages flooded during the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

It is not known when the equipment will be moved to Smiths Falls. (Branchline)

23/10/1993

Brockville Recorder

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

MOVEMENT OF GRAND TRUNK TRAIN TO SMITHS FALLS NOT A DONE DEAL:

Previous statements that the Smiths Falls Railway Museum will be receiving ex-Grand Trunk 2-6-0 No. 1008, as well as a baggage car and coach from the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, may have been overly optimistic. The train, on display near Upper Canada Village at Morrisburg, Ontario, is in deteriorating condition but the Parks Commission has yet to make a final decision that it will go to Smiths Falls. An official of the Commission recently admitted that something had to be done with the rolling stock but that efforts were being made to find a "local" group to assume responsibility. The train, displayed in front of the restored Aultsville Station, depicts the CN/Grand Trunk "Mocassin" (Nos. 25 and 26), an all-stops local between Brockville and Montreal that was discontinued in 1958 after more than 100 years of service. (Branchline)

21/03/1994

Brockville Recorder

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

REEVE WANTS RAIL DISPLAY RETAINED:

Morrisburg, Ontario, Reeve Gordon McGregor is spearheading a campaign to prevent the St. Lawrence Parks Commission from transferring ex-Grand Trunk 2-6-0 No. 1008, a baggage car and a coach to the Smiths Falls Railway Museum Association. The equipment is now displayed at Chrysler Park, east of Morrisburg, and depicts the one-time GTR "Mocassin", an all-stops local which ran from Brockville to Montreal. The train was discontinued by Canadian National in 1958.

The equipment is in an advanced state of deterioration as the Parks Commission can no longer afford to maintain it. Indeed, the Commission estimates that it could cost up to \$500,000 to repair the train and display it properly under some kind of shelter. Local government wants the train retained because it is a tourist attraction. On average, 200 people stop to see it on a daily basis during the tourist season. The train is displayed in front of the former Aultsville Station -which is completely restored and is alleged to date from 1866. (Branchline)

FUTURE OF GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY EXHIBIT STILL UNCERTAIN: Local support to retain CN Mogul 1008 and a baggage car and coach on display at Crysler Park near Morrisburg, Ontario, is gaining momentum. The collection is managed by the St. Lawrence Parks Commission which no longer has the financial resources to maintain the display in proper shape. For several months, the Commission had talked of donating the collection to the Smiths Falls Railway Museum but strong local opposition has forced a reconsideration of the decision.

Said Morrisburg Chamber of Commerce secretary, "We feel that it's an important landmark in the community and a reminder of our history and the Lost Villages (flooded during the making of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s)."

The engine and cars are displayed adjacent to the restored Aultsville, Ontario, GTR station. The display commemorates the early days of railroading "along the front" (ie. the first concession of the townships between Cardinal and Cornwall, Ontario). This land was flooded out in the late-1950s as part of the massive St. Lawrence Seaway project. The flooding entailed the almost total removal of communities and transportation links including CN's then Cornwall Subdivision (now the Kingston Subdivision). The Aultsville Station is located on the former right-of-way, a portion of which is now the route for re-located Highway No. 2 with the remaining sections either under water or passing through fields and local bush lots. (Branchline)

Sunday 05/10/2008 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

Man dies after being struck by train

A 50-year-old man has died after being struck by a train in the Rideau Heights/Hunt Club area of south Ottawa Friday night, police say.

The man was struck by an eastbound VIA Rail train at about 10:30 p.m. He was taken by ambulance to the Civic campus of Ottawa Hospital but died a short time later.

The man's identity has been confirmed and his family notified, but his name has not been released.

04/06/2009

EMC Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls

SITE CONFIRMED FOR NEW VIA STATION: A proposal to build the new VIA Rail station on the northern outskirts of Smiths Falls, Ontario, will require road closures on Union and Beckwith streets. Staff has no concern with conveying the 5,050 square feet of land on an unopened road allowance of Beckwith Street to VIA for this purpose, but voiced some concern with the 3,700 sq. ft. of land along Union. Elaine Mallory, director of administrative and planning services, recommended that a portion of these lands be retained by the town in case a road widening is required in the future. VIA is proposing to purchase the combined property on Union and Beckwith streets for \$4,500 (based on an appraisal by Rivington that was commissioned by VIA). Another critical element of this proposal is the 4,100 sq. ft. of land provided to VIA from Stanley Greer free of charge. This land made it possible for a station to be built at the site. VIA is asking the town to consider providing another lot of town-owned land, located nearby, to Greer free of charge as a sign of good faith with the project. The town has been working for about a year-and-a-half with VIA to retain the station itself within town limits. That would not be possible without the conveyance of Greer's property. It is understood that the station itself will be built on town property with the parking lot built on Township of Montague property. (Branchline)

Monday 17/08/2009 CTV Ottawa Smiths Falls

Fire Stalls VIA Train

323 passengers were evacuated from a VIA Rail train Sunday night after the engine caught on fire in a swampy area in south Ottawa.

Firefighters say it happened just after 8pm. The train was about 20 minutes away from Ottawa's Fallowfield station in the city's west end when the blaze broke out. It came to a stop on the tracks just south of the town of Richmond on a four kilometre stretch between McBean Street and Kettles Road.

Most of the evacuated passengers had to walk about two kilometres in the dark to be picked up. A few, including the elderly, were escorted by firefighters. Buses were called in to shelter them from the barrage of bugs in the swamp, and then later to bring them to the main terminal downtown. Frustrated family members waited hours for loved ones at the station on Tremblay Road. They called CTV Ottawa saying VIA Rail had given them no information.

13 passengers were treated for minor injuries, including bug bites. The cause of the fire is not known.

For 334 VIA passengers, what should have been a gentle Sunday evening ride from Toronto to Ottawa turned into a wilderness adventure full of hungry mosquitos in a swampy stretch of countryside near Richmond.

The discomfort started when the locomotive caught fire on Train 46 caught fire just as the passengers heard the announcement for Fallowfield station and the train lurched to a halt.

"There was the smell of burning rubber," said Monica Haberl, a 20-year-old Queen's University student returning to Ottawa.

The locomotive was belching a thick column of dark gray smoke into the evening air and filling the cars with an acrid stench. Passengers evacuated the train, streaming out behind the last car onto the single track as darkness fell and the ravenous mosquitos began to feast.

Trapped near the Jock River just after 8 p.m. about two and a half kilometres south of Richmond "the nearest rail crossing" the passengers waited for firefighters to quench the blaze, which caused an estimated \$800,000 damage to the locomotive.

Volunteer firefighters from Richmond-Stittsville were first on the scene, heading down from the McBean Street crossing on foot.

They brought a portable pump to douse the flames with river water, but "the majority of the fire went out by itself," said Ottawa Fire Platoon Chief Lawrence King.

No passengers were injured, although paramedics treated 13 for bug bites, allergic reactions and anxiety.

The train's two engineers were transported to hospital with minor smoke inhalation, paramedics said.

Though due to arrive in Ottawa at 8:11 p.m. most passengers didn't arrive in Ottawa until midnight.

"It was just chaotic," said Haberl's friend Meagan Healey, who was also on the train.

Healey said a VIA employee in her car kept shouting "the train is on fire, we need to evacuate," for the first three minutes before beginning to direct an evacuation.

Passengers were told to head to the back of the train, though train staff eventually opened up the side doors.

"In my car it wasn't chaos," said Haberl, though she said she didn't see a single VIA employee until one helped her off the train. It was a case of follow the crowd, she said.

Once out, the two 20-year-olds were at the mercy of mosquitos. Healey resorted to tying articles of clothing around her legs to ward of the onslaught.

Meanwhile Emilie Norris-Roozmon, 12, was searching for her eight-year-old sister Geneviève. Irritated by her sister's incessant requests to play cards, Emilie had managed to foist her off on a friendly VIA staffer.

Then the evacuation began.

Unbeknownst to Emilie, the employee had asked a friendly family to look after Geneviève.

Emilie found her "right as I was about to cry," she said. "I'm not a horrible sister," she said cheerfully. Saddled with her little sister once more, Emilie was condemned to live out the experience with VIA's unaccompanied minors, who were kept under watch by staff, she said.

"I think it was very well-handled," her dad Pierre Roozmon said. He wasn't on the train, but wasn't overly concerned for his daughters' safety. A friendly passenger loaned the girls a cellphone, which they used to keep Roozmon informed of their progress.

Rebecca Zuckerbrodt was less impressed. She waited in the sweltering Ottawa station for her 15-year-old son Sammy Diamantstein.

VIA told her there was a delay, she said, but then she says they wouldn't provide more information. She learned about the incident from cellphone conversations between passengers and those waiting at the station. She described VIA's service as "woefully inadequate."

The ordeal for the passengers began to end when maintenance staff to ferry passengers to the McBean Street crossing on rail-ready pickup trucks, about 20 at a time. About six air-conditioned OC Transpo buses waited, along with paramedics, firefighters and Ottawa Police.

The damaged locomotive was hauled to Ottawa. It sat on a siding Monday looking none the worse for wear except for a large panel on the left side where the blue paint had blistered off. A smaller part at the top of the right side of the train was also singed.

Bleary-eyed riders limped back to the Ottawa Train Station on Monday to retrieve belongings abandoned on the train. The baggage station was to stay open until 10:30 p.m. for passengers to pick up their luggage. Normal hours were to resume on Tuesday, but passengers can ask station staff for assistance at any time.

Ian Marshall's overall impression was that the evacuation was handled very orderly, though he praised the strong voices of army reservists on board who he said helped relay commands from VIA staff.

"It was very disorganized," countered Lorna Lyttle, who was shocked that frail, elderly and very young passengers were not evacuated first. Not enough was done to keep passengers informed, she said.

There was nothing but praise for emergency personnel, particularly firefighters who doled out water, blankets and good cheer in equal measure, even providing teddy bears to some of the children. They spread out along the tracks with flashlights, lighting the way for passengers walking on the treacherous, uneven gravel troughs on either side of the track.

When all else failed, passengers took refuge in humour. Many on the train had taken advantage of VIA's post-strike offer of heavily discounted tickets.

Variations on "you get what you pay for" were expressed frequently and at length by stranded passengers, Lyttle said.

Passengers will receive a full refund for the Toronto-Ottawa portion of their trip, said VIA spokesperson Catherine Kaloutsky. They will also receive a further credit for a round trip to the city they were travelling from.

"We feel it's a considerate compensation," she said. "We'd like to invite you back."

Passengers in Train 648, which followed train 46 to Ottawa, stopped at Smiths Falls. Passengers were bused to Ottawa, Kaloutsky said, and they will receive a 50 per cent voucher for the one-way portion of their journey. They arrived in Ottawa about two hours late, she said.

"We debrief the entire situation," Kaloutsky said, adding that VIA will try to learn from Sunday's events.

VIA is investigating the cause of the fire.

Ontario. VIA facing language complaint after fire

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages said Thursday it has launched an investigation after receiving two complaints following the evacuation of a Via Rail train south of Ottawa over the weekend. A fire started in the train's engine when it was travelling near Richmond Sunday night on the Toronto-Ottawa route. Some of the 300 passengers had reportedly complained about the lack of French instructions at the time of the evacuation. Via says it is investigating the matter to determine what caused the incident and looking into any communications related to it.

NEW PASSENGER RAIL STATION ON TRACK:

Smiths Falls will get a new VIA station by the end of 2010, located on the edge of town 1.5 kilometres north of the existing station on Union Street. It will be located on VIA's Smiths Falls Subdivision, and reduce the number of conflicts that VIA trains have with CP freight trains at the current station location. The new 400 sq. ft. station will be fully accessible, with standard features such as benches and washrooms. "We believe it will be an efficient environmentally-sound and attractive addition to your lovely town," said Maddy Fahmy, VIA Rail Canada's senior director of real estate. "We've worked hard to ensure that it will be in harmony with its surroundings and your community's rich railway heritage. We hope you'll agree when it opens to serve you." While the number of parking spaces at the new location has been reduced from the 26 originally proposed to 18, the site has room to grow. In addition to the station, Fahmy also announced \$20 million in "VIA-specific" improvements are planned for CP's Brockville Subdivision. That includes two new sidings between Smiths Falls and Brockville, an advanced Centralized Traffic Control signal system, upgraded protection at grade crossings and "strategic" sections of safety fencing. "This will enable us to operate more and faster trains, increasing the speed to 160 kilometres per hour at selected locations," Fahmy stated.

Currently, 20,000 people use the VIA station in Smiths Falls on an annual basis with four passenger trains in each direction stopping there each day. "We're looking at increasing two more trains in each direction," he indicated. When the new station opens, the waiting room in the old (former CPR) station will become part of the theatre lobby of the Smiths Falls Station Theatre, set to open in April.

Smiths Falls mayor Dennis Staples expressed gratitude to VIA and the federal government "for this most important and impressive investment in passenger rail service," and to CP for its co-operation in the initiative. Staples also spoke of continuing this collaboration "to seek ways to further enhance the increased potential for passenger and commuter rail service for this area." (YourOttawaRegion.com, Mar. 2; EMCSmithsFalls.ca, Mar. 11)

17/08/2010 *Smiths Falls This Week* *Smiths Falls**Smiths Falls***VIA STATION CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN NEXT MONTH:**

Construction is expected to begin at the end of September or, at the latest, early October on Smiths Falls' new station. "Early October. latest, is when we'll have shovels in the ground," says Malcolm Andrews, senior manager of media and community relations for Via Rail. "The status of the situation (is that) we're about to issue tenders. We're looking for contractors for construction." Andrews says a 'show and tell' was held at the station site August 10, and contractors interested in the project were given a tour of the location. "It's a normal part of the process," says Andrews. "It shows those who are potentially interested." Tenders were expected to be issued last week and will remain open for a couple of weeks, says Andrews. "The goal is to evaluate the process and select the winning bid," he says. "We hope to complete, with a contract negotiated and signed, the process by mid-to late September." Construction of the building is expected to take two to three months. "We certainly hope to have construction started and be completed by the end of the year, before snowfall," says Andrews. The project cost is in the neighbourhood of \$700,000. The fully accessible station will be located on the corner of Union and Ruthven streets and is expected to be 400 square feet in size. There will be 18 parking spaces at the station for users. The construction of VIA's new Smiths Falls station is part of the \$516 million capital program announced by the Government of Canada for VIA Rail in 2007. (Branchline)

Wednesday 01/09/2010 *Ottawa Citizen* *Smiths Falls*

VIA Rail tree-cutting angers Ottawa residents whose homes back on to track

Look just beyond the homes of Pineglen Crescent, and you could swear a train had run through there.

Tree limbs dangle from mature maples, a soil-filled ditch lies where grass and shrubs once grew.

Not to mention the track, which reaches farther than the eye can see.

A train does run behind those homes, but it's not what caused this damage.

"There was this huge equipment that was basically ripping the trees and vegetation and chipping them," said Nardin Ghahary, who has lived at 79 Pineglen Cres. for 27 years.

Her house used to back onto a thick barrier of trees and plants, but since VIA Rail cut down the trees, all she sees is a dull-looking track and some metal poles which will soon support a security fence.

Because the trees also blocked noise, Ghahary now has to deal with what sounds like a train running through her house every few hours.

One of her neighbours recorded the loudest train at 92 decibels in his home, which is as loud as a lawnmower running by, 10 times a day.

Ghahary is also concerned about the beauty of her neighbourhood, which she described as 'very quiet' with a "country-like atmosphere."

"Now, the place looks like a bomb hit it," she said on Friday, four days after the unearthing of vegetation began.

Fencing the "right-of-way," or the train track, is a common safety precaution, especially near neighbourhoods, said VIA spokesperson Malcolm Andrews.

"In built-up residential areas, more and more, that has been the custom over the last number of years," he said. "We put up safety fencing to prevent, to the extent possible, trespassing."

Ghahary is a member of the Glens community association, which includes people living on Pineglen and Grenfell Crescents, both of which border the train track. She says she and her neighbours were not notified about the fence building project until after VIA's hired contractors chopped down the trees that separated her backyard from the rail.

VIA has apologized for this error.

"The letters didn't go out as soon as they should have, so we apologize to people for not giving them quite as much advance notice as we could have," Andrews said.

Gord Hunter, councillor for Knoxdale-Merivale ward, said the city was not consulted about this work, but that he could not argue with VIA's safety reasons for installing a fence. He added that two young people had died on the line in question in the last 25 years.

Pierre Poilievre, MP for Nepean-Carleton, was also disappointed that he and his constituents had not been informed of the project, but said he accepted VIA's apology and a commitment that future notifications will be provided before any work is done.

Poilievre agreed that fencing is needed near railways to keep the public safe.

"For teenagers who might be wearing headsets, or people who are hearing impaired, or children who have not developed their sense of safety, it can lead to tragedies," he said. "Trespassing has led to fatalities in this region."

Andrews explained that there can be a considerable amount of brush growing beside the track that must be removed before a fence can be installed.

Ghahary worried that the destruction of trees would harm local wildlife, which she says flourishes in her neighbourhood.

Andrews said an environmental assessment was not required for the area. While birds may have lived very temporarily in the trees that were cut down, they likely did not nest there for long due to the loud sounds and vibrations from the trains, he said.

Ghahary's other major concern is that her water quality will be contaminated when a chemical spray is used on the track to prevent growth of weeds and plants.

The homes in her area rely on wells and septic tanks.

But Andrews said that railways have always sprayed along the tracks, so spraying should not cause a problem.

"Railways do spray from time to time beside the tracks," Andrews said, "basically to ensure safe operation and reasonable visibility, and to ensure that there isn't undue incursion of plant growth along the rail line in question."

Since 2003, there have been five trespassing incidents on the rail line between Smiths Falls and Ottawa, according to the Railway Association of Canada.

The RAC could not confirm how many instances of trespassing resulted in death.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada counted 52 trespassing fatalities nationwide in 2009, compared with an average of 59 trespassing fatalities between 2004 and 2008.

Via station work to be completed by year's end

Saumure & Sons Construction is working hard to complete all ground work at the new VIA Rail Station on Union Street in Smiths Falls before the frost arrives this year. Foundation work began approximately two weeks ago on the facility and will continue into the cold months. "We expect construction work to be completed by the end of the year," confirmed Ashley Doyle VIA Rail spokesperson. The building should be open for use by late January 2011, Saumure estimates. Doyle added landscaping will be undertaken once the spring thaw has taken place in 2011.

The design of the facility was unveiled earlier this year, but discussion on whether or not the building will have washrooms is still underway between the VIA and the town. "At present there is no facilities right now," Saumure said. During last week's Committee of the Whole meeting, Elaine Mallory, planning and administrative director said: "It's my understanding that they're constructing washrooms but not connecting them to water or sewer." Mallory further informed councilors at last week's meeting that VIA has opted to exercise its federal authority and not go through the town's building approval process. Mayor Dennis Staples asked staff to provide him with the details of the project as they know them and he will make contact with VIA officials in an effort to find an agreeable resolution for all.

The issue of washrooms has been ongoing, and earlier in 2010 council wished to maintain their current development standards and require VIA to extend the services at their cost and to town standards. The EMC did contact VIA for further information on their decision to not participate in the planning process and whether washrooms would or would not be part of the new facility, but a response was not available by deadline. Mallory said the town would need to receive written notification on VIA's intention to exercise their federal authority. (Branchline)

03/03/2011 *Smiths Falls EMC**Smiths Falls**Smiths Falls*

SMITHS FALLS VIA STATION TO OPEN IN MAY: Installation of washrooms in the new VIA station on Union Street in Smiths Falls, Ontario, will mean a summer opening for the new transportation hub. CAO Wayne Brown confirmed the town was successful in negotiating the inclusion of washrooms into the new train station. The verbal agreement struck between the two parties will see VIA pay to install services at the station provided that the Town of Smiths Falls covers plowing and cleaning of the facility for the next 20 years. This is similar to the agreement the town held with VIA for the former train station with the exception of having to open and close the station each night. The new station will be opened and closed electronically. Brown said the town is pleased to have come to an agreement with VIA that is beneficial for both sides and will result in providing excellent service for train travellers coming to Smiths Falls. "Not a lot of towns our size have the train still stopping," Brown said. Malcolm Andrews, spokesperson for VIA Rail, said the

construction project is on track and that the addition of washrooms did not cause significant delays. "There was sufficient space in terms of the floor plan," Andrews added. "We don't anticipate having all the work completed and ready until mid-May." The new station was announced last year at this time. The former train station will be entirely turned over to the theatre group. (Branchline)

21/10/2011 *VIA Rail Canada**Smiths Falls**Smiths Falls*

Smiths Falls and VIA Rail officially open new station built through Government of Canada funding

Smiths Falls, ON Today, His Worship Dennis Staples, Mayor of Smiths Falls and VIA Rail Canada's Senior Director, Real Estate, Magdy Fahmy officially opened Smiths Falls' new train station. Funding for this \$750,000 project came from the Government of Canada's \$923 million investment in VIA Rail for improvements to its facilities, equipment and infrastructure, including \$407 million through Canada's Economic Action Plan.

The completion of projects like Smiths Falls' new station shows the positive results being achieved for both rail passengers and the community of Smiths Falls through Government of Canada funding to VIA", said the Honourable Steven Fletcher, Minister of State for Transport. "It also underlines this Government's commitment to revitalize passenger rail service and support economic development in the region.

VIA Rail's new Smiths Falls station, which began serving passengers in early August, is fully accessible and located just north of downtown. With its distinctive tower, the new station has been designed to blend in with the historic character of Smiths Falls. Its new location will also lead to smoother and improved rail service at this important stop on VIA's busy Ottawa to Toronto route.

"Trains in Smiths Falls have a long and proud history, connecting people and businesses here with the rest of Canada since the first train arrived in 1859", said Mayor Staples. "On behalf of all the citizens of this great town, I am proud to be able to play a part in this new station's official inauguration, and want to thank the government and VIA Rail for this important contribution to our town's continuing prosperity."

Senior Director Fahmy added, "These investments are helping to ensure that Canadians have a passenger rail service that is safe, fast and more reliable. VIA is very pleased that the citizens of Smiths Falls are going to be a part of this new era in rail travel."

Wednesday 25/04/2012 *Ottawa Citizen* *Smiths Falls*

Nepean-Carleton MP Pierre Poilievre says he's concerned about the fact that Via passenger trains will soon be moving through Barrhaven crossings at speeds of up to 160 kilometres per hour.

The issue involves express trains that move between Ottawa and Toronto in just under four hours and don't stop at the Fallowfield station. Up until now, those express trains would slow down to 24 km/h as they went through the Fallowfield station and the crossings near it. The purpose of that slowdown has been to allow a minimum of 22-30 seconds between the time that the lights and safety gates are activated and the arrival of the train.

But Via has announced that it will install improved signalling technology that will maintain that interval without having to slow down the train from the 160 km/h maximum. As of May 6, crossings on Woodroffe Avenue and Fallowfield Road will have trains move through at that speed. And a crossing on Green Road will see trains move across at 140 km/h instead of the current 108 km/h. Other crossings in Barrhaven won't be affected, Poilievre said, because curvatures in the track at those points impose their own limitations on the speed of the trains. The express trains run once in each direction every day but Saturday.

Poilievre said Transport Canada has agreed to his request to send inspectors to look at the Barrhaven crossings and make sure the increased speeds don't constitute a safety hazard. He concedes, however, that Transport Canada has already approved the moves and that the higher speeds are already common all through the Via corridor.

"Because the Fallowfield station has slowed the trains in our community over a long period of time, it will be a new feature for the train to travel at that speed in our neighbourhood," he said. "I want the community to have every assurance that safety is protected and paramount."

Read more:

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/news/Increasing+speeds+trains+Barrhaven+crossing+concern+Nepean+Carleton+says/6512226/story.html#ixzz1t3BHsu9e>

Friday 24/07/2012 *Ottawa Citizen* *Smiths Falls*

VIA Rail Canada plans to re-place track ties in the Nepean and Barrhaven areas beginning Saturday. The company is scheduled to complete its standard maintenance by November, working overnight to avoid interfering with regular train operations. Workers will re-place 11 kilometres of ties, which keep rails the proper distance apart, starting from just west of Prince of Wales Drive to east of Highway 416. The process will include changing out the ties and track resurfacing. Any questions or comments should be directed to 1-866-757-6778.

Warning signals at the site of a fatal crash between a Via train and an OC Transpo bus last September malfunctioned Tuesday night, forcing OC Transpo to close the Transitway, a memo to city councillors says.

"At 10:16 p.m. last night (February 11, 2014), an OC Transpo operator approached the rail crossing signal at the level crossing near the Fallowfield Transit Station on the Southwest Transitway," wrote OC Transpo general manager John Manconi. "The signals were activated and one of the crossing arms was in the down position. The operator immediately notified the OC Transpo control centre advising of the circumstances as there were no trains present or approaching and the crossing signal on the adjacent Woodroffe Avenue was not activated."

The crossing signals are the responsibility of Via Rail, which owns the track. A contractor working for Via showed up to repair them while buses were rerouted to Woodroffe, Manconi wrote. The last train of the day, just after 11 p.m., helped to confirm the signals were working again.

Manconi's informed the Transportation Safety Board and Employment and Social Development Canada, both of which are investigating last September's crash at that crossing, his note concluded.

In that crash, a double-decker bus plowed through a lowered gate into the side of a Via train headed for Fallowfield station. Six people, including the bus driver, were killed. It's not yet certain why the bus didn't stop. whether the bus's brakes failed or driver Dave Woodard didn't use them, and if not, why not.

Since that crash, at least two incidents have been reported in which operators took their buses across the tracks even though the lights were flashing to warn of an oncoming train. In the first case, Manconi defended the driver, saying data from the bus's and train's computers indicated he'd have had to slam on the brakes, likely knocking riders over, to stop before reaching the tracks, and the train was still far away. In the second case, OC Transpo's last word a couple of weeks ago was that they were still trying to work out which bus was involved.

In the early 2000s, the city had planned to dig an underpass for both Woodroffe Avenue and the Transitway next to it: the roads and the tracks were busy enough to warrant the separation in the interest of safety. The project was abandoned when it turned out that unusual underground rock and water conditions made it much more expensive than the city expected.

Friday

14/02/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield

Work on the Via tracks where they cross the Transitway near Barrhaven closed the busway on Friday for the second time in a week.

City spokeswoman Nikki Eaton refused to say whether the closure, which lasted about an hour in early afternoon, was for scheduled work or an emergency repair. The signals malfunctioned Tuesday night and a bus driver encountered them flashing with no train in sight. One warning gate was down and the other up. That took about 40 minutes to fix.

Friday's work had nothing to do with the signals, said Via spokeswoman Mylène Bélanger from Montreal. "It was just some routine maintenance work on the railway at the crossing. Nothing major.

"We were fixing a piece of concrete."

It wasn't clear why the work had to be done in the middle of the day, when buses had to be detoured, or how much notice Via gave OC Transpo.

In a note to city councillors, transit general manager John Manconi implied the closure came without warning but it wasn't clear whether that was because it was an emergency or just carelessness on Via Rail's part.

"We have just been advised by Via Rail/Rail Term (a rail maintenance contractor) that they require the shutdown of the Transitway near Fallowfield station to undertake work to the signal crossing near the Fallowfield station. Buses are being diverted to Woodroffe Avenue," said the note, sent at 1:31 p.m. Friday. About an hour later, he wrote to say the Transitway had been reopened.

Bélanger wasn't immediately sure how much warning Via gave the city.

The crossing was the site of a crash last September that killed six people headed toward downtown on an OC Transpo bus.

"Any inquiries related to the work at the lights should be directed to VIA," Eaton wrote in response to a Citizen question Friday. Manconi's note also said that if councillors wanted to know more, they'd have to ask Via.

OTTAWA A broken down City of Ottawa truck and extreme cold are the culprits behind what appeared to be malfunctioning warning signals at a high-profile rail-crossing in Barrhaven where six people were killed last year.

Bus drivers are understandably cautious when crossing the train tracks near Fallowfield station where an OC Transpo bus collided with a VIA train. That's why they were quick to report twice last week when warning lights and the crossing arms were activated even though no train was approaching.

There was confusion about what happened at the site for more than a week until VIA Rail security staff explained the details on Friday. In an interview with the Citizen, they confirmed the first incident occurred Feb. 11 around 9:30 p.m. when a train went by and the lights remained on until after 10 p.m., when they were noticed by an OC Transpo bus driver approaching on the Transitway.

A heater designed to keep a sensor clear from frost took longer to work than usual that night, said Nicolas Panetta, senior adviser corporate security with VIA. This meant the crossing arm and lights remained activated until the heater cleared the sensor.

The second incident happened Friday morning when a city truck broke down on the Eagleson crossing west of Fallowfield. That led to a shutdown of all train traffic in the area, which meant a train slowly backing out of the Fallowfield station had to stop.

The train sensors recognized the train and kept the warning signals activated until the scene was cleared.

"We don't take a chance, we just shut it down right away," Panetta said.

Panetta described the false alarm with the sensor on Feb. 11 as a bit of a malfunction, but said both of last week's incidents were rather routine. If anything, the signals are working well because they are staying activated when something goes wrong, which is what they're supposed to do.

Transpo general manager John Manconi insisted the incidents were not caused by any "malfunction," saying news media reports were incorrect.

"I don't know where that came from, that's not our word," he told the Citizen on Thursday.

In a memo he sent to councillors last week, however, he clearly explained "that the rail signals at the crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station were malfunctioning" on Feb. 11.

Both incidents last week were reported to the Transportation Safety Board and Employment and Social Development Canada, the two organizations investigating the September crash.

In that tragic collision, a double-decker bus pushed through the lowered crossing arm and slammed into the side of a Via train headed for Fallowfield station. Six people, including bus driver Dave Woodard, were killed. It's not yet known whether the bus's brakes failed or Woodard didn't use them.

Since that crash, at least four incidents have been reported in which operators took their buses across the tracks even though the lights were flashing to warn of an oncoming train.

In the first case, Manconi defended the driver, saying data from the bus's and train's computers indicated he would have needed to slam on the brakes, likely knocking riders over, to stop before reaching the tracks, and the train was still far away. In the second case, OC Transpo's last word a couple of weeks ago was that it was still trying to work out which bus was involved.

In the early 2000s, the city had planned to dig an underpass for both Woodroffe Avenue and the Transitway next to it: the roads and the tracks were considered busy enough to warrant the separation in the interest of safety.

The project was abandoned when it turned out that unusual underground rock and water conditions would have made it much more expensive than the city had expected.

Wednesday 26/02/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Safety watchdog makes recommendations after latest OC Transpo incidents at Barrhaven rail crossing

Since the fatal bus-train collision that killed six people in Barrhaven last year, OC Transpo buses, on four occasions, have driven through the same rail crossing while warning lights were activated, according to observations from the Transportation Safety Board.

The safety watchdog made the statement in one of two letters of recommendation issued to the city on Tuesday regarding the reported incidents.

The TSB said it is calling on the city to "implement additional measures to ensure that buses can safely stop in advance of an activated railway crossing signal."

In the four incidents, the warning lights were activated, but the crossing arm had not yet come down, according to the letter. TSB also observed that bus drivers do not always slow down as they approach the crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station.

"According to most driver handbooks, when approaching a crossing, the vehicle driver should slow down, be prepared to stop, and yield the right of way to a train," according to an accompanying news release.

The TSB said that failing to stop when railway crossing signals are activated violates most provincial highway traffic acts. It also points out that "These acts may not necessarily apply to vehicles operating on private roads, such as the OC Transpo Transitway."

TSB also looked into another incident when warning lights and the south crossing gate remained activated after a train went by. Investigators confirmed what Via Rail said last week, that the automated crossing protection system went into fail-safe mode as it is designed to do.

Frost on electrical contacts was the source of the problem. While the crossing protection was still activated, three buses drove through the crossing, and one OC Transpo supervisor attempted to lift the south gate.

"Reasonable steps were taken to minimize risk, and there were no adverse consequences, but there are still opportunities to improve safety," TSB reported.

Investigators would not normally look into such incidents, but the TSB said it followed up on them "in light of heightened public concern."

The TSB is separately investigating the deadly collision that occurred on the morning of Sept. 18.

Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder said on Tuesday that the TSB and the city have been in constant communication during the safety watchdog's investigation.

"We said ... from the beginning, 'We will do what we need to do as recommendations come forward. Don't wait until the full report is ready. We want to know what you're finding as you go along,'" she said.

A memo from City Manager Kent Kirkpatrick said the city will review the TSB letters to address the matters being raised.

The memo, addressed to Mayor Jim Watson, members of council and members of the transit commission, noted that the city has already reduced the speed limit in the area to 50 km/h from 80 km/h, and is installing an amber early-warning signal for northbound Transitway traffic.

He said other planned measures include installing an amber early-warning signal for southbound Transitway Traffic, reviewing potential speed reductions and reviewing the bylaw that governs vehicles on the Transitway.

The Transitway is a city road and thus isn't governed by the province's Highway Traffic Act.

In the memo, Kirkpatrick also touted measures already undertaken by OC Transpo, such as written directives to drivers reminding them to exercise safe and defensive driving practices, among other instructions.

There are also daily internal radio announcements reminding drivers to exercise caution when approaching a rail crossing, and to adhere to posted speed limits.

All new bus operators also now visit the Transitway crossing at Fallowfield as part of their training, the memo said.

Police probed rail glitches before Raitt's public appeal

No foul play was found in crossing malfunctions

There is no current evidence to suggest that any foul play is involved.

An Ottawa detective had already investigated rail crossing malfunctions and the possibility of a tampering incident when Transport Minister Lisa Raitt publicly called for a police probe.

Internal Ottawa police documents, released under freedom-of-information legislation, show police officers were concerned and caught off guard by the request for an investigation on April 10. The request came the day after an acting inspector wrote a memo saying the earlier investigation found "No evidence of foul play."

Raitt, who oversees Via Rail, asked the Crown corporation to call on Ottawa police and CN Rail police to open an investigation because of "information she was provided that the malfunctions at the Barrhaven crossing may have been caused by something other than technical failures," Raitt's press secretary, Jana Regimbal, said in an email Wednesday.

"The Minister did not make the call to the police," Regimbal said. "The Minister was unaware that the Ottawa Police had already launched an investigation."

Police had started an investigation - six days before Raitt's request. A detective followed up on a call from a technician from RailTerm, the contract company that maintains tracks, who had been stationed to watch for malfunctions starting that day. The employee said he discovered a box containing railway crossing arm controls open at the Fallowfield crossing. It is usually locked and would require a tool to open, according to police notes. Earlier he'd seen "silhouettes" of a group of people in the area but thought nothing of it until he saw the box.

"There is no current evidence to suggest that any foul play is involved but we are doing our due diligence to rule it out," the acting inspector wrote in an email.

Det. Amy Haggerty, the officer assigned to the file, wrote in her notes that she spoke to the technician "at length about the ongoing issues with the crossings ... He states that he does not believe the malfunctions have been suspicious prior to this incident (although it should be noted that this incident did NOT cause a malfunction)."

Police statistics had already been compiled: between January and April, police responded to at least 35 calls for malfunctioning rail lights and arms, resulting in 57 police units being dispatched over the months. Not having a specific rail malfunction code in the database system meant the number could be low, a crime analyst cautioned.

Over the next few days, Haggerty talked to RailTerm's track maintenance manager, Via's director of infrastructure and a Via police senior investigator. The Via manager told Haggerty he didn't believe there was "any criminal aspect" to the malfunctions. He said many reports of railway lights and arms not working were false alarms but acknowledged there could be a higher than normal volume of malfunctions. The RailTerm manager described Barrhaven residents as "hyper-vigilant," Haggerty wrote, because of proximity to the site of the Sept. 18, 2013, crash of an OC Transpo bus and a Via train in which six people died. There was no malfunction at the time of the crash.

On April 9, the acting inspector sent a memo to one of the deputy chiefs explaining no foul play had been found. Malfunction causes "have been identified as technical in nature and explainable."

The next evening, after Raitt's office told reporters she wanted police called in, Ottawa officers seemed to have received no notification. Chief Charles Bordeleau wrote an email shortly before 9 p.m. asking one of his deputies to find out what Via wanted, whether a formal request had been made, and if the municipal force even had any jurisdiction.

A sergeant, after summarizing the series of events in a different email chain, said: "So all that to say, it appears we are continuing to investigate."

"What concerns me is how this got elevated to where we are right now without proper communication being provided," wrote another officer. "Further, that the belief is, without proper evidence to support the claim, that this is a criminal matter."

In another series of emails, an officer noted "increased political attention" the situation was getting. As well as having the attention of municipal politicians and Raitt, Ottawa West-Nepean MP John Baird was also calling on Via to sort out the problem. By the end of April, he was demanding Via's interim chief executive step down. A permanent CEO was put in place in May.

After a meeting on April 11 with Ottawa police, Via Rail police and RailTerm, Haggerty went to seven rail crossings with a forensic identification officer, looked further for video footage, and reviewed RailTerm data.

The officer had a similar conclusion on April 15 to her earlier finding. "At this time there is absolutely no evidence that indicates there is any criminal activity involved in the on going malfunction issues at the rail crossings in Barrhaven," she wrote.

Via has since stationed a former chief operating officer to oversee response to numerous problems in Ottawa that could be to blame for the frequent reported glitches and fail-safe modes. Raitt's emergency directive on six grade crossings, to ensure safe crossing of passenger and freight trains, is in effect until November.

New lawsuit by passenger in OC Transpo-Via Rail train crash seeks \$800,000

The City of Ottawa is facing a second lawsuit over a fatal crash between an OC Transpo bus and a Via Rail train.

Surviving passenger Humanyun Sharif, his wife and two children filed an \$800,000 lawsuit on Friday alleging that the city and bus driver David Woodard's negligence resulted in Sharif being permanently and seriously disfigured and injured.

According to the statement of claim, Sharif said he suffered injuries to his head, neck, back, shoulders, legs, knees, ankles, feet, arms and hands in the Sept. 18 crash at a railway crossing on the Transitway near Woodroffe Avenue and the Fallowfield transit station.

Six people were killed in the crash, including Woodard.

According to the statement of claim, Sharif was seated on the bus when it collided with the train around 8:45 a.m. after driving through a lowered warning arm. Sharif alleges that Woodard ignored the visible signal devices, was driving at an excessive speed given the circumstances, and that he failed to bring the No. 76 express bus to a safe stop, among other allegations.

The crash fractured Sharif's right knee and broke a bone in his foot and caused a large hematoma to the back of his head.

Sharif alleges that he now suffers from severe headaches, phobia, dizziness, disturbed sleep and nightmares.

Sharif's lawsuit is the second filed against the city and Woodard's estate.

The family of passenger Michael Bleakney, who was killed in the crash, have also filed a \$1.8-million lawsuit.

Four other passengers - Connor Boyd, Kyle Nash, Rob More and Karen Krzyzewski - were also killed.

Signals malfunction twice on Tuesday near site of fatal bus-train crash

OTTAWA - Police were called Tuesday night to a Barrhaven railway crossing for reported signal malfunctioning, hours after earlier signal issues.

Around 9 p.m., Acting Staff Sgt. Dave Bal said, a member of the public called police to the crossing again for malfunctioning signals. Police had been called there in the morning for the same reason.

"There was some traffic issues as a result, in terms of traffic being backed up. The arms went down when no train was going by, basically," Bal said.

Police awaited Via repair crews until repairs were made around 10:45 p.m. Officers stayed until 11 p.m. as a precaution when the last train passed by and there were no further signal issues.

Earlier in the day, Via said there was nothing alarming about warning signals malfunctioning in the morning at the crossing of Fallowfield Road between Greenbank Road and Woodroffe Avenue. The crossing is near the site of last year's fatal crash between a Via train and an OC Transpo bus.

Police said they were called just before 6:30 a.m. to direct traffic. Buses were initially detoured, but were soon back to travelling on the transitway.

Railterm, a VIA Rail contractor responsible for repairs, maintenance and technical support, was on the scene to fix the problem.

The repairs lasted into the afternoon. Via Rail's Twitter account reported just after 3:15 p.m. that the situation was resolved.

Via Rail spokesman Jacques C. Gagnon said such signal problems are a "normal occurrence" and that Railterm staff inspect each crossing signal a minimum of twice a week.

Signals can be activated by a number of different things, he said, including winter weather or road salt, which when combined with water becomes a conduit for electricity and can ignite signals.

Gagnon said that because of the Sept. 18 crash, Via Rail understands why there is particular sensitivity at that crossing and those nearby.

In the Sept. 18 crash that killed six people at a level rail crossing at Woodroffe Avenue north of Fallowfield station, a double-decker bus crashed through a lowered gate into the side of a Via train headed for Fallowfield station. The cause of the crash is not yet known.

Gagnon said that if Via Rail trains arrive at a crossing with signal problems, the rules state that one of the two engineers aboard the locomotive must step outside and walk alongside the train to ensure that there are no vehicles, pedestrians or other obstacles at the crossing.

On Tuesday, Railterm staff were dispatched to the site of the malfunction as soon as railway traffic control was alerted, Gagnon said.

Lisa Kelly, 23, said she was on her way to work around 6:35 a.m. when she saw the signals malfunctioning.

The lights were flashing and traffic was backed up because people weren't sure if they were allowed to cross or not, Kelly said.

"It was kind of a strange feeling, knowing what happened there," Kelly said. "It was a bit unsettling."

Last month, the federal Transportation Safety Board wrote two letters of recommendation to the city regarding safety at rail crossings. The TSB looked into an incident where warning lights and the south gate at the crossing where September's fatal crash occurred remained activated after a train went by.

Frost on electrical contacts was the source of the problem. While the crossing protection was still activated, three buses drove through the crossing, and one OC Transpo supervisor attempted to lift the south gate.

"Reasonable steps were taken to minimize risk, and there were no adverse consequences, but there are still opportunities to improve safety," the TSB reported.

Thursday

13/03/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

City prepares bylaw to penalize transit drivers who ignore railway warning lights

OTTAWA - The city will crack down on OC Transpo drivers who drive through railway crossings even though warning lights are flashing, according to a memo released Wednesday.

It's the latest response to last month's revelation that since Sept. 18's fatal bus-train collision in Barrhaven, OC Transpo buses have driven through that same crossing four times while warning lights were activated.

The federal Transportation Safety Board, in one of two safety letters to the city last month, called on the city to implement additional measures to ensure that buses can safely stop in advance of an activated railway crossing signal.

Since then, according to Wednesday's memo by deputy city manager Steve Kanellakos, city lawyers and OC Transpo staff have found that changing the transit bylaw governing vehicles on the Transitway is justified. He wrote that staff are finalizing details of the bylaw change that would prohibit vehicles from crossing a railway when there is warning of an approaching train - in order to create an offence similar to what is currently found in the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit vehicles from crossing at a railway crossing when a warning of an approaching train is given.

The Transitway is a private city road and thus isn't governed by the province's Highway Traffic Act. The TSB said that failing to stop when railway crossing signals are activated violates most provincial highway traffic acts.

City staff will also conduct a "comprehensive review" of transitway speed limits from the Nepean Sportsplex to south of Fallowfield Station, the memo said.

Following the deadly Sept. 18 collision between an OC Transpo bus and Via Rail train that killed six people, including the bus driver, the city reduced the speed limit in the vicinity of the crossing to 50 kilometres an hour from 80 km/h.

Last month, the TSB issued two safety letters to the city.

One of the letters described four incidents in which the warning lights were activated but the crossing arm had not yet come down. The TSB also observed that bus drivers do not always slow down as they approach the crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station.

The board also recommended installing an amber early-warning signal for southbound traffic.

City staff are also conducting an engineering review regarding a southbound early-warning signal. The city and Via Rail are already working on a signal for northbound traffic, the memo said.

Wednesday's memo also said the city received a direction from the federal Department of Employment and Social Development that said OC Transpo "had not sufficiently identified and assessed the workplace health and safety-related hazards at railway crossings where operators are required to work" in light of federal labour laws.

The city has retained safety engineering consultants to review that issue.

Friday

28/03/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Third lawsuit filed arising from fatal bus-train crash

OTTAWA — The family of another passenger killed in the crash between an OC Transpo bus and a Via Rail train has filed a lawsuit against the city and the estate of the dead driver.

Rob More's family launched the \$600,000 lawsuit Tuesday. It's the third lawsuit filed against the city since the Sept. 18 crash at a level crossing near the Fallowfield Transitway station that killed five passengers plus the driver David Woodard.

More's parents and his sister say they have each suffered a loss of care, guidance and companionship of the 35-year-old More. More, who had cerebral palsy, lived with his sister during the week and with his parents on weekends, according to the statement of claim.

More, an employee of IBM Canada, was on his way to work. He was seated at the front of the bus when it collided with the train.

The lawsuit alleges that driver Woodard was negligent when he drove through the flashing warning lights and crossing gate and hit the side of the train.

Woodard's estate and the city have also been sued for \$1.8 million by the family of passenger Michael Bleakney, who was killed in the crash. Surviving passenger Humanyun Sharif, his wife and two children filed an \$800,000 lawsuit alleging that the city and that negligence of the part of Woodard resulted in Sharif's being permanently and seriously disfigured and injured.

The families of the three other passengers killed in the crash - Connor Boyd, Kyle Nash and Karen Krzyzewski - have yet to file a lawsuit.

Another signal problem at Fallowfield railway crossing

OTTAWA - Traffic at a Barrhaven railway crossing was disrupted by a signal malfunction Friday evening, the second such malfunction at that crossing this month.

Police received calls just after 5:30 p.m. that railway warning signals were flashing and gates were down at the Fallowfield Road railway crossing between Greenbank Road and Woodroffe Avenue, even though there were no trains passing through.

Drivers reported delays as long as 20 minutes at the crossing, and OC Transpo buses were delayed by at least 10 minutes.

Police officers directed traffic while Via Rail-contracted staff made repairs. That work was still going on around 8 p.m. Friday.

Earlier this month, an early-morning signal malfunction at the same crossing briefly snarled traffic. Repairs that day took until mid-afternoon.

Via Rail has said in the past that such signal problems are a normal occurrence and that staff at Railterm, a VIA contractor responsible for repairs, maintenance and technical support, inspect each crossing signal at least twice a week.

Signals can be activated by a number of things, including winter weather or road salt, which when combined with water becomes a conduit for electricity and can ignite signals.

The railway crossing is near the site of last year's fatal crash between a Via train and an OC Transpo bus.

In the Sept. 18 crash that killed six people at a level rail crossing at Woodroffe Avenue north of Fallowfield station, a double-decker bus crashed through a lowered gate into the side of a Via train headed for Fallowfield station. The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

Wednesday 02/04/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson calls on Via to fix rail crossing.

OTTAWA - Via Rail needs to get its act together and fix the faulty railway crossing near the site of last year's fatal crash between a passenger train and an OC Transpo double-decker bus, a tough-talking Jim Watson said Tuesday.

The mayor was to raise his concerns during a telephone call with Via's acting president, Steve Del Bosco.

At least eight signal malfunctions over the past three months have caused angst in the community and among people who cross the tracks there every day, Watson said.

"I've become more and more frustrated with the fact that these are Via signals and they're not working properly and they're eroding confidence of both the city and the public who have to travel across that particular roadway," he said.

"Clearly there's a problem and it's a Via problem, and they've got to get their act together and they've got to fix it."

Watson said this isn't a case, as a Via spokesman suggested last month, of people being more sensitive following the Sept. 18 crash at a level crossing that killed six people after a double-decker bus crashed through a lowered gate and into the side of a Via train headed for Fallowfield station.

The crossing gates are going down when there's no train or are not going down when there is a train, Watson said, adding he's prepared to call federal Transport Minister Lisa Raitt if the problem is not resolved soon.

"If I'm not satisfied, then I'll go speak to the minister of transportation and ask her to intervene to get Via Rail to do its job," Watson said.

A Via spokesman said last month that such signal problems are a "normal occurrence" and that staff from Railterm, the company contracted to maintain the signals, inspect each crossing signal at least twice a week.

Signals can be activated by a number of different things, he said at the time, including winter weather or road salt, which, when combined with water, becomes a conduit for electricity and can ignite signals

The families of two of the passengers killed in the crash, as well as a passenger who survived, have all launched lawsuits against the city and the estate of the dead driver, David Woodard.

The cause of the crash is not yet known.

Late Tuesday, in an email to councillors, Watson said Del Bosco assured him that fixing the technical issues is a priority for Via Rail.

"He says that VIA Rail's best technical staff and resources " both internal and external "are reviewing the signals, and will update the City in the coming weeks," Watson's email said.

Saturday 06/04/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Via Rail posting staff at Ottawa crossings, including site of fatal crash

'I just want the damn thing fixed,' MP says

OTTAWA - Via Rail is posting staff at the Fallowfield-area rail crossings around the clock -including the site of last year's fatal crash between a passenger train and an OC Transpo double-decker bus — to monitor faulty signals, after Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird told Transport Canada officials to have the problem fixed with a week.

"I'm furious," said Baird on Friday after hearing that a rail-crossing signal failed for the ninth time since the fatal crash between an OC Transpo bus and a train last fall. The minister then took it upon himself to speak to people in the federal transportation department, including his cabinet colleague, Transport Minister Lisa Raitt.

"I want the head of VIA Rail to stand there to make sure it's working, until it's fixed," said Baird. "If he needs a little tent, we can live with that, if that's what's necessary. But I want this fixed within a week.

"I don't want any excuses. I don't want any committees. I don't want another six months of chasing their tails around. I just want the damn thing fixed."

Although Via's interim chief executive Steve Del Bosco won't personally be camped out by the rail crossings, Via will now have personnel in the vicinity to monitor the level crossings at Fallowfield Road, Woodroffe Avenue and the OC Transpo Transitway until further notice.

The workers will monitor the function of the automatic warning devices and take steps to ensure public safety if a device acts up while making necessary repairs. As the MP for Ottawa West-Nepean, Baird recognizes that a rail crossing malfunction in this area is almost as much about emotional well-being as it is about actual safety.

"It's still very raw in the community," said the minister referring to the tragic Sept. 18 crash. "My friends, my family, drive by there. They want to know that it's working. Every time I drive by it I think about the tragedy that happened and the lives that were lost. "

Baird was not the only elected official fuming mad at Via.

Friday morning's signal malfunction was the last straw for Mayor Jim Watson, too.

"I let it be known to our city manager (Kent Kirkpatrick) that I was fed up with what was happening in the Barrhaven area and I wanted a solution," he said.

"I was probably too angry to speak with someone at Via. I'd probably say something I'd regret later because I was just so annoyed."

Via staff were on the scene Friday morning and the company said workers would remain there until the situation was resolved. The company issues a news release that, among other things, apologized for any inconvenience.

The issue of faulty signals gained steam Tuesday when a tough-talking Watson said Via needed to get its act together to resolve the problem.

"I've become more and more frustrated with the fact that these are Via signals and they're not working properly and they're eroding confidence of both the city and the public who have to travel across that particular roadway," he told reporters after a finance committee meeting.

"Clearly there's a problem and it's a Via problem, and they've got to get their act together and they've got to fix it."

When going ballistic is the way to travel.

Baird, not Watson, gets Via Rail to move

In politics, evidently, it is sometimes wiser to throw a hissy-fit than call a meeting.

Witness the ongoing fiasco of the Via Rail crossing near Fallowfield station. All it took to finally get some action was for John Baird to go nuclear, start naming names and deliver some nasty in the public square.

"I want the head of Via Rail to stand there to make sure it's working, until it's fixed," the area MP and foreign affairs minister spat out on Friday. "If he needs a little tent, we can live with that, if that's what's necessary. But I want this fixed within a week."

No more meetings, no more excuses.

It is to cheer, whatever you might think of Baird. In a city where we need a task force to decide whether the sun is shining, how refreshing to hear someone in authority say: "Cut the crap and don't show your face until the mess is fixed. Now get out."

The optics, at least, are that Jim Watson may be mayor of Ottawa, but Baird is the capital's godfather whose ring must be kissed in order to get real things done. Upon your throne, your Worship.

Watson, you'll recall, was on the horn with senior Via executives earlier in the week and managed to squeeze out a commitment that the faulty signals would be fixed within four weeks.

And this, seven months after six people were killed at the intersection? And with - what? - as many as nine malfunctions since? It's a miracle the signals were working properly on the day of the crash.

The problem, as we understand it, is not that the lights and barriers are failing to work when a train is approaching traffic, but the opposite. The lights are going off when no train is coming, leading to traffic chaos and jittery motoring for commuters still on edge. If Via were a home alarm company, honestly, they would have been fired months ago.

Via has vowed to have personnel on site 24/7 until further notice. Call me a skeptic, but I'm not sure I believe them. A worker will be on site at 3 a.m., when neither trains nor buses are travelling? Now things are getting stupid.

I drove out Sunday morning to have a look-see. There was no one around the main intersection where the tracks cross four lanes of Woodroffe and the parallel Transitway. But there did appear to be a man in a parked pickup truck near the intersection of the tracks and Fallowfield, just west of the station, where the lights and gates have also malfunctioned.

So maybe they will man it around the clock indefinitely.

But surely this is a bit of political theatre. The answer is not to have a repairman available at a moment's notice. The answer is to fix the wonky signals so they work properly in the first place.

Honestly, how hard can it be? It's not a spaceship about to launch to Mars. It's lights and arms and bells that go ding-ding at the right time. Are these guys not in the railway business? Do they not have hundreds of these things across Canada?

There is an eye-opening lesson here about political tone, as well.

Jim Watson is sometimes too nice for the city's own good. He does not give the impression of a politician who, when all else fails, is capable of kicking butts across the room. And do it when people are watching. It is not a terrible thing to instil a little fear among other tribal leaders.

"I let it be known to our city manager that I was fed up with what was happening in the Barrhaven area and I wanted a solution," the Citizen reported the mayor's reaction on Saturday.

A little lame. I'm sure they're quaking in their boots at Via headquarters.

The problem with being conciliatory all the time, addicted to harmony - and showing up at too many bake sales and pancake breakfasts - is that, when a big problem arises, you will be told to take a number, then asked to be "reasonable" about your demands. Watson may be a nicer guy than Baird, but Baird is a craftier politician. Why? Because he knows the value, with proper timing, of going ballistic.

Rail signals dogged by more glitches.

Two more signal snafus occurred Monday morning at Ottawa railway crossings, days after politicians demanded Via Rail fix similar problems nearby.

Since Friday, Via has had workers watching three Fallowfield-area crossings, ready to report and inspect signal problems.

But it was two other crossings at Jockvale and Strandherd roads where problems occurred Monday. Technicians were sent to investigate why the railway's warning devices had gone into fail-safe mode, when barriers or lights activate when a train isn't there.

The pair of problems were at least the 10th and 11th reported at Ottawa rail crossings since last September.

Unlike Monday's problems, some have happened close to the site of last year's fatal crash between a passenger train and an OC Transpo double-decker bus that killed six people.

The tragedy makes the community more sensitive to rail glitches, Mayor Jim Watson has said.

"Even with the added attention, he said, the volume of problems seems high.

We're fortunate that no one has been killed or injured as a result of these malfunctions,"

Watson said Monday. "The problem has to get fixed."

Via spokeswoman Mylène Bélanger said safety is Via's top concern. She did not give an update on Monday's investigation.

Last week, a fix to the signal problems was demanded by Watson and Ottawa West-Nepean MP John Baird.

Via had said on Friday it would have a staff member in the area 24/7 until the issue was resolved.

So far, that hasn't been enough for Watson or Baird.

"I'm not satisfied because the problem isn't fixed," Watson said. "I'll be satisfied when the problem's fixed."

Baird, who demanded on Friday that the signal malfunctions be fixed within a week, said he was disappointed to see more problems Monday.

Spokesman Adam Hodge said Baird is "tremendously frustrated" and is working with Transport Minister Lisa Raitt to "hold Via's feet to the fire" to get the issues fixed.

Protective gates didn't lower for train

As a Via Rail train passed through Barrhaven on Wednesday afternoon, the railway's protective gates were not lowered, lights did not flash and bells did not sound.

As a Via Rail train passed through Barrhaven Wednesday afternoon, the railway's protective gates were not lowered. A worker dressed in orange watched the intersection.

A worker dressed in orange watched the intersection for part of the time, as the train moved slowly west, and the gates stayed raised.

A Via spokesman said the Greenbank Road incident was a "100 per cent normal situation and occurs on a regular basis at all crossings."

But it's the latest in a string of incidents witnessed by a community worried about safety around the tracks and a lack of information coming from Via.

"Why is the arm up? Why isn't it working?" asked Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder. "That's the solution, to walk trains across tracks, across roads? That's not a solution."

For Harder and others in Barrhaven, frustration is mounting about more than a dozen reported signal malfunctions since last fall. The situation has the attention of Mayor Jim Watson and MP John Baird, who both ordered Via last week to fix the problem as soon as possible.

Since then, Via said Monday morning there had been a pair of signal glitches at two different crossings - at Jockvale and Strandherd roads - where the railway's warning devices stopped working normally for an unknown reason.

The devices, according to Via, went into fail-safe mode, meaning the barriers, sounds or lights were activated when a train wasn't there.

Then on Tuesday evening, a memo went out to councillors saying there had been a malfunction reported at the Greenbank Road. Another went out Wednesday morning saying there was a malfunction at the Fallowfield crossing, where it intersects with the Transitway, which is one of the three crossings where a Via worker has been on site to keep watch for issues since last week.

Initially on Wednesday, Via spokeswoman Mylène Bélanger contradicted the city's report and said there had been no Greenbank issue Tuesday.

"These situations did not occur ... It could be something else," Bélanger said.

But by late afternoon, once photos of Wednesday's incident were posted online, spokesman Jacques Gagnon responded, saying there had in fact been a problem there the day before at Greenbank. There's an order in place from Via's contractor RailTerm, instructing train crews to stop before a crossing and have a crew member get out to protect the crossing for some of the time it passes through, Gagnon said in an email.

The order was put in place Tuesday because an advanced warning device is out of service, he said, to make sure trains aren't accelerating or decelerating through the crossing while work is being done nearby at Jockvale Road.

Gagnon said it's a "normal situation." Others dispute that. "There is a major problem here in Barrhaven ... Via hasn't been able to tell us of any other place in Canada where there's been a similar circumstance," Harder said, adding she's glad there are temporary safety measures in place but that there needs to be a permanent solution.

"You absolutely have to live here to understand the pressure that this causes for this community," she said. "You're crossing tracks all day long (in Barrhaven). The level of angst that we have in this community, we need a solution and we need it fast."

During the time Via was saying nothing happened at Greenbank on Tuesday, Harder told reporters she witnessed cars crossing the tracks as the lights were flashing but the gates weren't down. Within minutes, she said, a train was crossing the tracks and was being led by an employee decked out in orange.

She said she's been telling students, seniors and other residents to report every issue they're seeing at the tracks, since she doesn't want people to become complacent.

She said she doesn't understand why there's been no answer on what's causing the issues.

"They're not pioneering Western Canada and the wild, wild west, OK? There are tools that should be available to them," Harder said. "They shouldn't be counting on the safety of the people I represent, based on those people paying extra attention and making the call and actually making so much effort."

Charles Bottomley, who was driving his three daughters home Wednesday around 3:35 p.m. when he approached the tracks, said he was alarmed to see a train pass with the gates up, while there were no flashing lights or sound.

"I don't trust it now," he said, adding he's been stuck at another malfunctioning crossing in the past week. "I think it's unbelievable they can't fix it ... I cross these tracks every day with my kids."

Being close to the scene of last fall's collision between an OC Transpo bus and train makes the situation even worse, he said.

"I know that wasn't Via's fault," he said. "It's just that of all the areas that they can't get this right, I don't think ironic is the right word. It's just not right."

Time for Via to level with us on crossing malfunctions

Via Rail has suggested that the growing fury over the malfunctioning railway crossing signals is about emotions running high after last fall's tragic accident. Or it's the media stirring things up. And that's when the railway line admits to any problems - usually it claims everything is just swell.

Take this past Tuesday evening, for example. Councillors received an email at 5:22 p.m. from one of the city's traffic managers informing them that the railway crossing signals were not working properly at the Greenbank Road crossing. "Via Rail have been notified and are co-ordinating repair efforts," said the email. Almost an hour later, another city employee emailed council that Via told them the crossing was clear at 6:10 p.m. Except that's not what Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder heard from a resident at an open house she was attending. The resident told the exasperated councillor that at 6:24 p.m. the signals were still wonky. To make matters worse, when Citizen reporter Carys Mills contacted Via Wednesday morning to ask about the incident, the only reply from the rail company's spokeswoman was that "the situations did not occurred (sic)."

On Wednesday evening, a train travelling west crossed the tracks at Greenbank Road while the security arm was still up. Aghast drivers sent photos. The eventual (and almost incomprehensible) answer from Via that it turned out the Greenbank crossing signal was out of service a day earlier and that all procedures were being followed to a T.

Via's emailed statement: "100% normal situation and occurs on a regular basis at all crossings."

And it's this sort of arrogant response that's the most maddening part of this entire signal malfunction debacle that's gained speed over the past few months. It is bad enough that, in the months since the fatal crash between an OC Transpo bus and a Via Rail train, south-end residents have endured inconvenience and a fair amount of worry from at least a dozen of these types of incidents. But it's completely unacceptable that the Crown corporation would so callously dismiss the community's first-hand experiences as either non-existent or a usual occurrence that we shouldn't worry our pretty little heads about.

Via may be right that we have a heightened sense of safety issues since the Sept. 18 crash in which six died. And why shouldn't we?

It's important to remember that according to all reports - including one by the Transportation Safety Board - all rail crossing signals were working properly at the site of the fateful accident. But it's understandable that we're all paying more attention to issues like railway crossings in the months following the crash.

And because you've been paying more attention, and telling us in the media about the problems you're seeing, we've been reporting more of those malfunctions. It's hard to see how this is bad, except maybe for Via, which two years ago spent \$16 million on the track that runs through Barrhaven, including significant improvements to the level crossing warning systems. (How's that working out?)

Reporters call Via each day in vain for detailed explanations on what's going on: Are all the malfunctions the same? What is it about the issue that's so tricky to fix? How does Via know when its signals malfunction and how does it let people know about it? All these questions, and yet, Via cannot make any of its technical employees available to speak to the media.

A number of people - here's looking at you, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird - have opined that fixing crossing signals isn't rocket science. Perhaps. But it might be more complicated than it looks from the outside. So why doesn't Via send someone to Ottawa to explain to us?

Perhaps pressing Via for a technical briefing is something our civic leaders could work on together instead of the political posturing they've been indulging in during the past week. Baird, who's also the MP for Ottawa West-Nepean, last Friday demanded that Via have the signal problems fixed within a week. He understands that the after-effects of the crash are "still very raw in the community," which was deeply affected by the September accident. But the problems won't be fixed by Friday, and the minister flipping his fiery red lid over it won't make it so.

Mayor Jim Watson is also - extremely upset by these continued signal failures at Via crossings that are eroding public confidence in these crossings. - As he should be. But Watson is now goading Baird on Twitter and elsewhere about the minister's "promise" it wasn't a promise - to have everything fixed up by week's end.

When that doesn't happen come Friday, Watson shouldn't gloat, nor should Baird issue further threats. Instead they should bury whatever partisan issues they have, even temporarily, to figure out what it will take for a permanent solution to this crossing issue. Or at the very least, our politicians could make Via executives answer our questions. That modicum of respect is the least that Ottawans deserve.

Thursday

10/04/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

City won't make buses stop at tracks

Mandatory stops would increase crash risk, study finds

The City of Ottawa will not compel transit buses to stop at all railway crossings automatically after an independent study suggested that doing so would increase the chances of a crash by as much as 17 per cent.

In the weeks after the tragic collision between an OC Transpo bus and a Via Rail train last September, many members of the public called for buses to be required to stop at all railway crossings as an additional safety measure.

Coun. Diane Deans, chair of Ottawa's transit committee, acknowledged that making all buses stop might seem ideal but underlined the need not to set policy on "gut feelings." Instead, the city hired MMM Group to review research on whether stopping at all rail crossings - even if the lights aren't flashing and the barrier isn't down - would increase safety.

On Wednesday afternoon, the consultants were emphatic that the evidence shows that requiring buses to stop at crossings even when they aren't active won't improve safety. Moreover, automatically stopping could increase the chances of a train hitting a vehicle; it would take a bus longer to cross the tracks from a standstill.

"The time required to completely traverse and clear an at-grade crossing represents an unavoidable period of exposure to the risk of collision with a train," according to the MMM report.

"The longer this period of exposure, the greater the likelihood that a train may arrive while the vehicle has entered and not yet completely cleared the crossing ... exposure periods are longer when vehicles must stop before entering and clearing a crossing."

In addition, the report said buses stopping at crossings could cause vehicles to crash into the rear end of the buses.

The Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the Sept. 18 crash in which six people died, will also make recommendations about whether buses should stop at all crossings.

OC Transpo boss John Manconi said that, depending on what's in the TSB report, the city could revisit this policy. Manconi was also at pains to say that keeping buses on schedule and saving money were not considerations when studying whether the buses should stop at every crossing.

MMM's recommendations appear largely - but not solely - based on a 1985 report published by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration, which is one of the few studies that quantifies the safety implications of required stopping.

Although the data is almost 30 years old, MMM Group's Geoffrey Millen contended that "from a technical standpoint, it (the study) is very rigorous. They used a large amount of data, all the data has been validated ... we're comfortable in stating that we'd expect to see the same type of results for here in Ottawa."

The MMM Group also reviewed all 20 OC Transpo-railway intersections and recommended that the gated crossings - where a barrier or arm is lowered when a train is approaching - be installed at the six Ottawa crossings that are protected by flashing signals only. No OC Transpo bus routes traverse unprotected crossings.

The city plans to install gated crossings at four of the six intersections - Herzberg, Lester, March, and McCarthy roads. It will also review how best to serve customers who ride a once-a-week bus that travels over tracks at Carp Road and Donald B. Munro.

Police called in over rail signal woes.

Federal transport minister suspects more than 'technical malfunctions'

The ongoing saga of Via Rail's malfunctioning crossing signals in Barrhaven took a mysterious turn Thursday when Transport Minister Lisa Raitt called for police to investigate the problem.

It appears that vandalism is now being considered as at least one possible cause of the dozen or so signal malfunctions that have occurred in the south Ottawa community since the fatal crash of an OC Transpo bus and Via Rail passenger train last September.

Last Friday, Via Rail announced it would staff the three rail crossings with the most problems - Woodroffe, Fallowfield and the Transitway - around the clock until the problems were resolved.

Sources close to the issue told the Citizen that soon after the Via Rail staff person began the on-site monitoring, the staffer saw an undetermined number of people (anywhere from one to three) around one of the controllers. When the staffer went to speak to the others, the people at the controller ran off.

"Earlier today, Minister Raitt asked VIA to call in the Ottawa Police and CN Rail police requesting them to open an investigation," according to an email from the transport minister's press secretary, Jana Regimbal.

A late-evening release from Via Rail confirmed that it "will ask the Ottawa Police to open an inquiry on these recent incidents."

However, CN Rail had yet to hear of the request to help investigate and spokeswoman Lindsay Fedchyshyn told the Citizen the company believes "this section of track ... is owned by Via, so CN Police, I can't imagine how they would be involved."

Over the past few weeks, Via Rail and Transport Canada have been examining a series of signal malfunctions at railway crossings in Ottawa in recent months.

"Through this process, some information has been attained which leads the government, VIA and Transport to suspect that technical malfunctions may not be the only reason for the current rash of problems," said Regimbal.

In recent weeks, Regimbal said, Via and Transport Canada have "exhaustingly examined all potential scenarios for what may be causing these problems."

In addition to asking police authorities to get involved, Regimbal said, Raitt has asked VIA and Transport to send a team of three employees at all three crossings to monitor and ensure the public is safe at all time. They will remain there until this matter is firmly resolved.

Via Rail's statement explained the supervision in a slightly different way:

"Personnel will be stationed at these (six) locations in order to provide supplementary support to automatic warning devices including ensuring that motorists and pedestrians stop at each crossing."

The Fallowfield crossings that will be receiving the extra attention include Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, Fallowfield Road, Greenbank Road, Jockvale Road and Strandherd Road.

According to Via Rail, "trains will be operating at reduced speed at each of the six crossings ... As a result, longer traffic stops and longer activation of automatic warning devices at these crossings can be expected. This temporary measure will also cause some train delays."

The Crown corporation is also in discussions with the City of Ottawa about the possibility of installing cameras at the crossings.

Raitt's press secretary Regimbal note the "unusual number of malfunctions at the Fallowfield crossing in Barrhaven" started particularly being noticed after the Sept. 18 fatal crash in the area.

There were no signal issues involved in the tragic accident, but the event has made many people in the Barrhaven area more aware of safety issues. Since the fall, there have been about a dozen reported signal glitches at Ottawa crossings, sometimes involving fail-safe mode. The mode means lights, sounds and barriers are activated when no train is present because there's an issue somewhere on the railway.

Friday 11/04/2014 Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

MPS call for action on Barrhaven rail problems.

Malfunctions at railway crossings in Barrhaven have prompted the federal government to call in the police. The Citizen's CARYS MILLS asks a rail expert explain what is going wrong.

Politicians had been ordering Via Rail to sort out Barrhaven's rail woes for more than a week before the federal government asked for the police to be called in Thursday.

To better understand what Transport Minister Lisa Raitt calls an "unusual number of malfunctions," the Citizen asked a rail expert about how signals should work at railways.

London, Ont. rail expert Richard Plokhaar explains:

How should railway signals work?

A track has circuits. At some point before a crossing, when you occupy the track with your train, you shortcut a circuit so the railroad crossing will "'close." Closed means that the barriers come down, the red lights will flash and the bells ring.

How can it go wrong?

A track circuit can break pretty easily. If there's a thunderstorm with lightning, that might affect that track circuit ... What might have happened over the last winter was there was too much salt on the roads, so those track circuits got deregulated and they need to be reset. Or there could be a bug in the system - the whole circuit is connected and an issue could be hard to find - whether it's old equipment that's buggy and needs replacing or something else.

So one piece of faulty equipment could mess up more than one crossing?

Oh yeah. Imagine you had one mile or kilometre of track with five crossings on it, you have a bug in one of the track circuits, all those five crossings that are in that section will be closed as if a train is coming. They're all interconnected if you have the crossings close together.

So what is 'fail-safe mode'?

Whatever caused a failure, the crossing should go into safe mode. This is a specific technical term used in aviation, railways and other industries. It's how to make something safe if it fails. If someone broke something at a crossing, the crossing would go down and it will stay closed " because it failed somewhere.

There was a situation this week at Greenbank Road's tracks where the crossing did not close when a train came through. What was happening?

I watched a video of the situation that starts the moment the train starts accelerating. The train was really slow and they had flagged the crossing - that's a railway term for making sure that you know a railway crossing is not working ... It gets turned off because you don't want to have it closed indefinitely, so they tell the crews to stop at the crossing, and secure it.

How does that work?

A crew member has to get out " it's an official rule " to stop the traffic. Then you get back in your cab and you continue the track. It's nothing of concern, it's a normal operation.

Do you think we have more rail issues in Barrhaven than elsewhere? Are we being overly sensitive?

It might be a combination. I don't know if the amount of defects is normal because we don't have the statistics. It might be that there's a bug in the system there that's hard to find for the rail owner. They might be struggling with that - they might be really busy, wondering what the heck is going wrong. That's painful and it's not something signal technicians do on purpose. But it's up to Via Rail to explain that. People are writing to the newspapers, the mayor's busy with it, and the councillors and members of Parliament - so you don't need the data for it, it's already too many.

Are you concerned?

With a fail safe, it's just a disturbance, a delay. That's absolutely fine. My biggest concern is that people get so upset that they don't obey the rules any more. They get so frustrated, it becomes high risk. No one is taking care to inform the public properly. The public is going to behave irrationally and will cross even when there's a train coming.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Fear and loathing in Barrhaven

Crossing gate nearly lands on roof of car in latest Via signal malfunction

The day after police were called in to investigate the possibility of vandalism at the Via Rail crossings in Barrhaven, less than 24 hours after additional staff were put in place at six crossings to provide additional security, the gate at the Woodroffe Avenue level rail crossing almost smashed into the top of a car.

So much for having the signal malfunction fixed in a week. And so much for the people of Barrhaven feeling a little safer about travelling over the railway tracks. It was about 2:30 on Friday afternoon when an eastbound Via Rail train sat just west of where Woodroffe Avenue crosses the railway tracks. Sadly, the nearby transitway crossing is known to all of us as the site of the tragic crash between an OC Transpo bus and a passenger train last fall. But, just like on the day of the accident, the automated signal system seemed to be working just fine.

The bells sounded. Red lights started flashing. Two gates automatically lowered to keep the north and southbound Woodroffe traffic from proceeding. Two men in fluorescent orange vests walk to each side of the road. This last part is a very recent addition to the safety routine. Since the accident last fall, there has been a series of crossing signal malfunctions.

In the past few weeks, they seem to have increased in frequency. Under political pressure - and an eventual order from Transport Canada - Via Rail has stationed workers at six level crossings in Barrhaven to - provide supplementary support - to the automatic equipment.

The train crawled through the crossing, reduced speed being another of the temporary measures Via Rail announced late Thursday while the signal issues were being sorted out. Indeed, the order to slow trains through Barrhaven might be delaying Toronto-Ottawa trips by half an hour.

The train passed, the gates rose and the Woodroffe traffic started to move across the tracks. All good.

Except that the bells were still going. That seemed wrong. And after a few seconds, the gates came back down as cars were crossing the tracks. Thankfully, the gates didn't actually hit the roofs of any vehicles, although it sure looked close. Barrhaven residents reported the same sort of incident as having occurred the previous evening at the Greenbank crossing.

As the public outcry over these malfunctions has grown louder over the past few weeks, Via Rail has reminded us that "at no time was public safety compromised." This is generally true. While it's hard to know the exact nature of each malfunction - Via Rail either cannot or would rather not share the details - whatever is causing the problem is triggering the system's "fail-safe mode," where the lights flash and the gates come down even when no train is approaching. It's inconvenient and it's confusing. But we'd rather additional safety precautions than not enough.

But the possibility of a gate coming down on the top of your car doesn't seem particularly safe, either. And the incident goes a long way to explaining why the people of Barrhaven are justifiably nervous about crossing the railway tracks.

Indeed, Barrhavenites must surely traverse railway tracks more than any other residents in Ottawa.

There are six crossings in the Barrhaven area - Woodroffe, the Transitway, Fallowfield, Greenbank, Jockvale and Strandherd - which means pretty much everyone who lives there has to cross at the track once or twice a day. Usually more. The train even crosses a multi-use pathway, where it's necessary to have a mini-gate system to block the way of joggers and dog walkers and schoolchildren when a train is coming.

One might wonder at the wisdom (not to mention the political interference) that went into planning a community with such a multitude of railway crossings, especially in an area where building grade-separated crossings is almost prohibitively expensive. But that's another story and beside the point. Today, 85,000 people live in Barrhaven and they deserve to feel as safe as the rest of us.

They do not. You can see it in the way they approach a crossing. They slow down and hesitate, drivers and their passengers looking both ways along the track. Just in case. What if this is the time that the gates don't come down when the train is on its way?

Sure, some of this nervousness may come from a heightened sense of worry regarding crossing because of the Sept. 18 crash that killed six people and injured many more, most of them from the Barrhaven community. It's natural that the residents who were so personally affected by the tragedy continue to feel the after effects of it.

But a lot of their concern comes from the very real malfunctions, the types that see a gate almost smash into a car roof. Add to that a possibility that the security system has been tampered with.

Late last week, a Via Rail worker saw three people around one of the control boxes.

When the worker approached, the others ran off. Ottawa police are now investigating. So are the people of Barrhaven a little nervous? You bet. They have every reason to be.

Bus-rail meetings make us nervous.

In a week during which there was plenty of news about at-grade railway crossings - all of it bad - the city indicated it's sticking with its policy of not requiring OC Transpo buses to stop automatically at all crossings. It was a bold move. Since the Sept. 18 crash between an OC Transpo bus and a Via Rail passenger train in which six people were killed, many members of the public have called for public transit buses to be required to stop at all railway crossings, at all times.

Although everyone agrees that all the railway security features were working fine the day of the tragic crash - witnesses reported the lights were flashing and the gates were down, facts confirmed later by the Transportation Safety Board - making buses stop at every crossing is still seen by some as an extra security measure.

City officials understand the sentiment. Even though neither federal regulations nor the provincial Highway Traffic Act require stopping at each crossing, intuitively, it seems as though automatic stopping would be safer for buses.

But intuition isn't always right. Nor should it be the basis of public policy. Instead, the city quietly hired (and why quietly is anyone's guess) MMM Group to undertake an independent review of the evidence out there on whether stopping automatically at crossings is actually safer.

Just to be clear, we obviously expect all vehicles to stop when lights are flashing, bells are ringing, and barriers are down. (No OC Transpo routes traverse crossings that are completely unprotected.) What's currently under discussion is whether buses should stop even when no warning signals are engaged, a situation referred to in the transportation world as "non-active."

And the answer is a very resounding No.

According to MMM Group's research of existing data, requiring buses to stop at all crossings actually increases the likelihood of an accident between a train and a passenger bus by 17.4 per cent. Now, that's a 17 per cent increase of a small number, thank goodness - one of the problems researching this question is that there are so few accident statistics to draw from - but clearly we don't want to heighten the chances of an accident. Even so, we should give the city credit for setting policy that goes against public opinion, which is no easy task. Still, there are several serious issues the transit commission needs to consider when it meets Wednesday to discuss MMM Group's report.

First is the age of the data used in the study, most of which dates back 30 years.

The "seminal" quantitative research looking specifically at this issue was funded and published by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration in 1985.

In an official city briefing with councillors and media last week (which occurred before the report was released, making it difficult to ask detailed questions), MMM Group's Geoffrey Millen contended that "from a technical standpoint, (the study) is very rigorous. They used a large amount of data, all the data has been validated. Fair enough.

But technology has changed in the past three decades. The transit bus of 1985 isn't the bus of today. More recent research would be reassuring, and that research should be funded by Transport Canada, perhaps in conjunction with its U.S. counterpart to reflect the current North American experience.

And then there's the timing of the city's report. More than once, Millen referred to the fact that stopping at all railway crossings, even when they weren't active, wasn't safer, as long as the warning devices were working properly. But as we know, the warning signals at a number of crossings in Barrhaven are malfunctioning on a regular basis. That's why residents are taking it upon themselves to stop - or at least slow down significantly - before they drive across the tracks. Who can blame them?

So until the signal issues in Ottawa are fixed and complete confidence in the safety of these intersections is restored, many will remain skeptical that buses should not automatically stop at all crossings, no matter what the 30-year-old data shows.

New lights to warn buses at crossing.

Amber beacon to be set up near crash site

The city wants a continuously flashing amber beacon atop a railway warning sign on the northbound Transitway, close to the site of last fall's fatal crash between a bus and train.

The warning should be installed and working by May 15, according to a report going to Ottawa's transit commission on Wednesday.

Following the crash, which killed six people, the federal Transportation Safety Board began investigating. The probe is ongoing, but after initial findings were released, the city hired engineering firm CIMA+ to look at aspects of Transitway safety, including the feasibility of an advance warning light.

The firm recommended the warning sign and light be installed on the northbound curve toward the tracks, the same direction the bus was travelling before the collision.

As bus drivers leave Fallowfield Station now, they see a railway warning sign about 130 metres before the crossing.

The new sign will be earlier, 210 metres in advance of the railway crossing, which has its own warning system with a safety gate and red warning lights.

The new sign will have a flashing light to get extra attention. "These beacons provide a heightened emphasis to the warning message," the firm said in its report. Part of the rationale for the enhanced warning was the "uniqueness of the Transitway" and tracks being "immediately after a long curve."

The city's public works department and Via Rail agreed with the firm's recommendations, according to the city report. The firm is still studying whether there should be a similar warning on the straight, southbound approach to the tracks, and whether there should be a speed limit reduction. After the collision, the city reduced the speed from 60 km/h to 50 km/h.

In the same report, the city said it has now established procedures, including public communication, with Via Rail to ensure safety when there's a railway-crossing malfunction. The city did not release the procedure when requested Monday.

There was no signal malfunction at the time of the fatal crash. But since then there has been a rash of reported signal malfunctions in Barrhaven. However, the flashing beacon is continuous, so it won't need to be connected to the railway's warning system, the consultant's report notes.

The latest recommendation is on top of earlier measures taken by the city.

Police end Via Rail crossing probe

Malfunctions at seven southwest Ottawa railway crossings weren't the result of tampering, Ottawa police said Wednesday as they announced that their investigation into possible mischief had ended less than a week after it began.

Police said they'd found "no damage or mischief to any of the rail equipment" while investigating with Via Rail police.

Officers were called in last Thursday at the suggestion of federal Transport Minister Lisa Raitt after a week of growing political pressure federally and municipally for Via to fix what Raitt called a "rash of problems" in Barrhaven.

Via spokesman Jacques C. Gagnon said Thursday that staff watching three of the problematic crossings had thought they'd seen people trying to "toy with the equipment." But that now appears unrelated to frequent reports by commuters of crossings frequently going into fail-safe mode, which means lights, gates and warning bells sounding when no train is approaching.

"We are deploying all available resources," Gagnon said, adding there are "dozens" of staff working on the issues. "We are really working very hard to find out about the possible glitches."

The situation is particularly concerning to Barrhaven residents because of last fall's collision there between a bus and train on the Transitway, which killed six people on the bus. There was no signal glitch on the day of the crash; the reports of persistent malfunctions began afterward.

The week before calling in the police, Via stationed staff around the clock at three of the crossings with the most issues: Woodroffe, Fallowfield and the Transitway. When police were called in last week, Via said staff would be stationed at six crossings to help with warnings and to make sure drivers were stopping at the crossings. External experts, including a group from California, are now being consulted, along with the regular maintenance contractor, RailTerm, Gagnon said.

"There are multiple moving parts. It's very complex. We don't know. If it was simple, we would have resolved this a long time ago," Gagnon said. "There's a number of technical (possibilities): sensors, switches, warning lights, barriers ... ground work."

The railway system's automatic warning devices - which include sound, lights and gates -are sensitive because their activation relies on the track's circuit working properly, Gagnon said.

When the system is working properly, warnings should be activated when a train travels over part of the track as it approaches the crossing. But when there's a problem somewhere, the system goes into fail-safe mode, meaning the warnings turn on and remain on until they're turned off by staff investigating the problem. The issue in Ottawa is trying to find where the problem is.

Via also warned on Thursday that work will done at six crossings over the next two weeks. Gagnon said the work isn't tied to the ending of the police investigation and that it isn't because Via has found the problem.

"It's like owning a house and having to do regular maintenance ... we're doing the regular maintenance and prevention and tests," he said, adding there haven't been any malfunctions this week that he's aware of.

Work will be done at Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, Fallowfield Road, Greenbank Road, Jockvale Road and Strandherd Drive - six of the crossings investigated by police, who also looked at Merivale Road.

Safety will be ensured and impact on traffic will be minimized, according to the Crown corporation.

Gagnon said work was done Wednesday at Woodroffe Avenue and at Fallowfield Road, where there was cleaning and testing of some equipment. On Thursday, he said, Greenbank Road's protective gate on the south side will be replaced and tested.

He said everything possible was being done to "make sure the situation in Ottawa is brought to a normal level of activities."

Via also reminded people to obey railway signals at all times.

Thursday

17/04/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

City updates safety procedures for bus-rail crossings

Almost seven months after the fatal Barrhaven bus-train crash, the city's transit commission has received five observations. A sign warning bus drivers of the railway crossing ahead, with a continuously flashing amber light atop it, will go on the northbound Transitway 210 metres before the tracks. There's an existing sign, without a light, 130 metres before the tracks. "Because of the curve, just in advance of the crossing travelling in the northbound direction, extra emphasis in this particular case is warranted," said consultant Chris Philp, an engineer with firm CIMA+, which was hired to study Transitway safety.

NO NEW LIGHT

But Philp said there's no need for one on the southbound Transitway approach to the tracks. That stretch doesn't curve or have any other issues that require an advanced warning, whether it's a continuously flashing beacon or other advanced warning systems tied to the railway, which were studied as options.

SPEED

Another issue looked at by Philp was whether the bus drivers should slow down on the Transitway. After the crash, the city reduced the speed limit in the area to 50 kilometres an hour from 60 km/h. Philp said either speed would be appropriate. But after looking at speed data, he suggested sticking with 50 km/h, as long as the city keeps monitoring the appropriate speed. "There's really no compelling reason that should be changed at this time," he said.

DON'T STOP

The city is maintaining its policy of not having OC Transpo buses stop at railway crossings if no train is coming and no signals are active. Drivers slow down and prepare to stop if they see an oncoming train. But following the crash, there were questions about whether drivers should stop automatically stop at all railways, as they do in Toronto and Montreal. "Most people think that stopping and then starting again would be safer - that's actually not the case," said commission chair Diane Deans. She said it might be time for the Canadian government to conduct its own study, since the consultant who studied the Ottawa issue relied on U.S. data from 1985. "Having a more current scan would be beneficial," Deans said.

TALK IT OUT

There was no signal malfunction at the time of the fatal Barrhaven bus-train crash in September. But after that there has been a rash of reported signal malfunctions in Barrhaven. Following up on the TSB's observations, the city has a new policy with Via Rail to "better ensure safe operations during railway malfunctions," which includes communications between Via and city staff, and with the public and councillors. After 311 gets a call about a malfunction, traffic services and public works are notified, and a city traffic management inspector becomes the government's main contact and is the person who liaises with Via.

Friday

18/04/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Via Rail agrees to meet over signal woes.

At the request of Mayor Jim Watson, Via Rail will hold a technical briefing at City Hall next week to explain the ongoing issues with crossing signals malfunctioning in the Barrhaven area.

"I think you will agree that there has been a failure to communicate key facts to the public in a timely manner about these failures," Watson wrote in a letter dated April 11 to Via's interim president and chief executive Steve Del Bosco. "This has exacerbated the public's loss of confidence in these rail crossings."

The mayor wanted Del Bosco "to personally intervene" and commit to hosting a technical briefing in Ottawa, suggesting that a briefing "would be the most effective medium for engaging with the public, media and members of Council on the safety and technical issues raised over the course of the last few days."

According to the letter, Ottawa's senior staff have been urging Via's management team to hold such a meeting.

According to Watson's office, Del Bosco agreed on Thursday afternoon to hold the briefing next week.

There have been more than a dozen signal malfunctions at a number of Barrhaven crossings since the fall, the frequency of which seems to be increasing of late. Just last week, the Citizen witnessed a gate coming down on a car "narrowly missing the roof" well after the train had passed.

There has been heightening sensitivity at rail crossings in the Barrhaven area ever since the Sept. 18 crash between an OC Transpo bus and Via train, in which six people died. Even though the signals and gates were working properly at the site of the fatal crash - where the train crosses the transitway adjacent to Woodroffe Avenue - the tragic event would naturally make people in the area a little extra attentive about rail crossings.

But the malfunctions are making many motorists in Barrhaven downright nervous.

Via has taken some steps to assure the public, including reducing the speed the train travels through the community and using flagmen at six Barrhaven crossings, measures put in place after Transport Minister Lisa Raitt intervened in the file. She also called for Ottawa police to investigate a suspicious incident in which three individuals were seen near one of the controller boxes, but police have since reported they found no evidence of tampering.

In his letter, Watson also reminded Del Bosco of Via's promise "on April 1 to permanently repair these crossings within four weeks."

Tuesday

22/04/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Via Rail webpage updates residents on signals.

Via Rail has created an online hub of information for frustrated Barrhaven residents dealing with railway-signal malfunctions and track work.

The Crown corporation has also said it would hold a public briefing this week in response to a written request by Mayor Jim Watson, in which he said there had been "a failure to communicate key facts to the public in a timely manner about these failures."

Watson's letter was released on Thursday by his office. But on Monday, Via Rail spokeswoman Mylène Bélanger said the date for the briefing still hadn't been determined.

But after weeks of frustration over little information coming from Via, Bélanger said Monday there is now a webpage (viarail.ca/en/aboutvia-rail/information-ottawaarea-residents) with updates for Ottawa residents.

The page outlines work being done at railway crossings on Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, Fallowfield Road, Greenbank Road, Jockvale Road and Strandherd Drive.

Via also explains precautions in place until the source of the malfunctions is found, including train speeds being reduced through Barrhaven and flagmen being posted at the crossings.

Since last fall, there have been more than a dozen reported malfunctions in Barrhaven, where there's increased concern after last September's fatal bus-train collision. There were no signal issues at the time of the crash.

On the website, there are tips for reporting issues and explanations of railway lingo.

"Have you seen this picture?" accompanies a resident's photo of a train passing through Barrhaven earlier this month and the gates of the crossing were up. Via explains the policy is to have the train stop first, then a crew member gets out to watch and secure the crossing before the train slowly moves through.

The police found no foul play in the frequent malfunctions. Via is investigating.

Tuesday

22/04/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Via crossing tests to be done this week.

Monday night to Tuesday morning:

All six crossings are tested, which may activate the crossing's warning devices (lights, gates and sounds). Flagmen will be at the crossings.

Tuesday night to Wednesday morning: Greenbank Road's gate will be changed and warning devices will be tested.

Wednesday night to Thursday morning: Woodroffe Avenue and Fallowfield Road crossings will have work done on their gates in the road medians, which will require temporary lane reductions overnight.

Thursday night to Friday morning:

All crossings will be tested, which could activate warning devices, so flagmen will be on site.

Four train crossings return to normal.

Safety orders still in effect at 2 others

Four of the six malfunctioning railway crossing signals in Barrhaven have received the all-clear from Transport Canada - but the public still has no explanation of what caused persistent problems at the sites in recent months.

Some of those answers may come Friday, as executives from Via Rail and contractor RailTerm face councillors at city hall. Via has agreed to provide a "technical briefing" on the signal glitches.

The mayor, councillors and local members of Parliament have been calling on the Crown corporation to explain more than a dozen reported malfunctions since last fall. Transport Canada, the federal authority that imposed safety orders on six crossings two weeks ago, did not say exactly what findings made it lift orders at four crossings Wednesday, while keeping orders at two other crossings in place.

The lifting of orders at the Fallowfield Road, Greenbank Road, Jockvale Road and Strandherd Drive crossings allowed Via to end extra safety precautions at those crossings as of 7 p.m. Thursday.

Trains went back to their regular speeds there, following a two-week slowdown that began with Transport Canada's orders - a response to warning barriers, lights and sounds that had been activated for unknown reasons when trains weren't coming. Flagmen no longer need to be stationed permanently at those crossings.

After monitoring Via's recent response, including extra maintenance and testing at the crossings, the federal government has become satisfied the company is "maintaining the safety of railway operations" at the four crossings, said Transport Canada spokeswoman Silvia Di Tiero.

But at the Transitway and Woodroffe Avenue crossings, Transport Canada is not satisfied. Safety orders will remain "until the issues are under control and the immediate threat is resolved," said Di Tiero, who did not answer questions about whether the source of malfunctions has been found at the four cleared crossings. Via spokesman Jacques C. Gagnon said some answers will be available when engineering firms retained by Via - Siemens and Hatch Mott MacDonald - issue a report next week.

"Let's wait for the final report to be tabled," Gagnon said, adding it will be made public.

Asked if the reason for frequent fail-safe-mode activations - the railway term for warnings going off when no train is present because there's an issue somewhere on the track - had been found at four crossings, Gagnon said "No stone was left unturned."

"As for the other two crossings, we're still keeping a close eye and we'll make some progress, for sure," he said. "The good news is that nothing has happened in the past two weeks."

He noted the two remaining crossings are close to the site of last fall's bus-train crash that killed six people. There were no signal malfunctions at the time of the crash but the tragedy has increased community sensitivity to safety issues around the tracks.

"We understand the sensitivity," Gagnon said.

Transport Minister Lisa Raitt's office did not respond to questions Thursday about some safety orders being lifted.

When the orders were issued, Raitt had also requested the police be called in to investigate possible tampering. But Ottawa police said last week they had found no foul play.

Saturday 26/04/2014 Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Railway officials say 'perfect storm' of factors caused signal malfunctions.

OTTAWA "A perfect storm of factor" from an accumulation of road salt and other debris in the rails to vibrations from train wheels - appears to have caused the series of railway crossing malfunctions in Barrhaven that have left residents and politicians fuming and rail officials scratching their heads.

That was the main take-away from a long-awaited technical briefing Friday at city hall led by representatives from Via Rail and RailTerm, the company tasked with maintaining the half-dozen crossings in question. They were represented by Steve Del Bosco, Via's interim president and chief executive, Marc Beaulieu, Via's chief of transport and regional general manager for Eastern Canada, and Aaron Branston, vice-president of engineering and maintenance of RailTerm, the contractor that operates and maintains the railway crossing signals.

Mayor Jim Watson, councillors Jan Harder, Keith Egli, Allan Hubley, and senior city staff were also on hand.

A study by independent engineers will be delivered next week and is expected to answer even more questions. But in the meantime, here's what we know so far. How should railway signals work?

A track has circuits. As a train approaches a crossing, it shortcuts a circuit so the railroad crossing will "close." Closed means that the barriers come down, the red lights flash and the bells ring.

What's the problem?

There are actually three key reasons for the signal malfunctions, and they just happen to be occurring all at once.

First, the track ballast structure - that is, the stone that supports the rails - has been compromised in some spots by excess water accumulation, road salt and debris this winter, and that has caused the system to fall out of calibration.

Second, excess vibration from the train wheels on the tracks is causing the gates to re-engage after a train has already passed.

And finally, electrical interference from nearby power lines has caused sporadic issues.

But we live in Canada, where road salt is as much a part of winter as hockey and tobogganing. Why has this caused so much trouble in Barrhaven this year?

That's the key question and the one officials struggled the most to answer on Friday. They said Barrhaven is unique because it features a series of crossings within a short distance and a highly-populated area, perhaps hinting that we hear about them more because road users are inconvenienced by them more often.

They also blamed brutal winter weather and the fact that some power lines adjacent to crossings have been carrying a higher-than-normal level of power recently.

"It was a matter of everything happening all at the same time," Beaulieu said.

What is RailTerm doing to fix the problem?

The company has recalibrated the system where necessary and made other technical changes, as well as improved drainage and hired an outside electrical expert to advise it on the interference issues. It is also stepping up signal and track inspections and developing a system that will send automatic alerts to the rail control office whenever the crossings are engaged so it can dispatch workers as needed (currently, problems are reported by rail staff, OC Transpo drivers and members of the public).

RailTerm is also replacing signage to make emergency numbers more visible and adding signage in some places, so people know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Via blames Transpo for new crossing issues.

Two buses failed to stop far enough back, railway says

Via Rail says there have been two recent incidents in which OC Transpo buses failed to stop on time at rail crossings - and that one of them caused Monday night's signal problem at the Fallowfield Road crossing.

Coun. Diane Deans, chair of the transit commission, said the city and OC Transpo are investigating the incidents, which they first learned about through a Via Rail news release Tuesday.

"This was a surprise to us," Deans said. "We need to investigate and see if there is any merit to these claims."

In a statement, Via Rail said an OC Transpo bus approaching the crossing around 7 p.m. stopped beyond the stop line and under the gate as it was being lowered, damaging the gate. The crossing's warning lights were flashing, indicating an approaching train.

That damaged the gate and triggered so-called fail-safe mode, Via said. But fail-safe mode - the railway term for lights flashing and bells ringing when no train is present - remained in effect afterward. A technician was dispatched and fixed the problem within about an hour, Via said.

Via also said that on Friday an OC Transpo bus failed to stop at the appropriate line while warning lights were flashing.

In light of the two occurrences, Via Rail's interim chief executive, Steve Del Bosco, has written to Mayor Jim Watson and OC Transpo general manager John Manconi, asking that "the city investigate these incidents and take appropriate measures to avoid their re-occurrence," the Via statement said.

City council passed a bylaw amendment last week formally requiring buses to stop at railway crossings when warning signals are flashing, indicating an approaching train.

Deans said the city and OC Transpo are looking into the incidents and that the city manager has requested a meeting with Del Bosco on Wednesday. The signal issues have been happening for months, but Deans said Via Rail had never before suggested signal problems had been caused by an OC Transpo bus.

"We need to be working on a relationship with Via Rail," she said. "It's not about us and them, it's about us working together to resolve this issue. Ultimately the people of Barrhaven want those signals fixed."

Police were directing traffic at the Fallowfield crossing Monday evening when the lights of the crossing were activated but the arms remained up. There have been more than a dozen reported malfunctions at railway crossings in Barrhaven since last fall, prompting local politicians to demand answers.

The mayor, speaking Tuesday morning before Via's statement, said the ongoing signal issues remain a concern for Barrhaven residents.

"We have to get to the root problem of this. Via has to find out what's going on, and we've got to ensure that this kind of activity stops, because it's eroding confidence in Via's system over there," he said.

Last week, Transport Canada lifted safety orders it had imposed at four of the six malfunctioning railway crossings, including the Fallowfield Road crossing. Two other crossings still have reduced speeds and flagmen permanently stationed there.

At a long-awaited technical briefing last week led by representatives from Via Rail and Railterm, its contractor that operates and maintains railway crossing signals, officials presented three key reasons for the signal malfunctions. First, the track ballast structure, the crushed stone that supports the rails, has been compromised in some spots by excess water accumulation, road salt and debris, causing the system to fall out of calibration.

Second, excess vibration from train wheels on the tracks is causing the gates to re-engage after a train has passed. Third, electrical interference from nearby power lines has caused sporadic issues.

A study by an independent engineering firm is expected to be delivered Wednesday and could provide further detail.

Baird wants Via Rail boss to step down.

Minister says he's lost confidence in Del Bosco as result of crossing-signal issues

John Baird is calling for Via Rail's top man to step down after the Crown corporation erroneously blamed an OC Transpo bus for a signal malfunction earlier this week, an incident that the foreign affairs minister referred to as "the last straw" in the saga of the Barrhaven rail crossings.

"We've lost confidence with the acting head of Via and it is time for new leadership," said Baird, the Conservative MP for Ottawa West-Nepean. "The people of Nepean deserve much better."

Like other local politicians - and the public in general - Baird has been very critical of the repeated rail crossing malfunctions in the south Ottawa community of Barrhaven.

A few weeks ago, together with Nepean-Carleton MP Pierre Poilievre and Transport Canada staff, Baird told senior Via employees he not only wanted the technical issues fixed, but also better communication with the city and the public.

"We were very clear that we would hold them accountable," Baird said. And the person accountable is Steve Del Bosco, Via's interim chief executive.

Baird says government backs him on Via boss.

John Baird says he speaks for the government in calling for railway head to step down, but Transport Minister Lisa Raitt won't go that far. Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird says he is speaking for the government when he calls for the head of Via Rail to step down.

However Transport Minister Lisa Raitt, who has authority over the arms-length Crown corporation, stopped short of echoing Baird's claim, with a spokesperson saying the minister expects Via to be better.

Baird first told the Citizen on Thursday that it was time for a change in leadership at Via Rail, whose interim president and chief executive Steve Del Bosco was appointed in January.

"We've lost confidence with the acting head of Via and it is time for new leadership," he said. "The people of Nepean deserve much better."

On Friday, Baird again blasted Via, saying its actions over the past two to three weeks have been "unacceptable.

"I've laid out my views very clearly, and I would encourage you to watch in the coming days," Baird told reporters. Asked if that's the government's position or his own, Baird responded, "I always speak for the government."

Via Rail spokesman Jacques C. Gagnon said on Friday that the Crown corporation, as a matter of policy, doesn't make comments about statements by members of Parliament.

It's possible that Baird won't have to wait long to get his wish. Mayor Jim Watson said on Friday that he'd been told that a permanent chief executive was going to be named in two weeks anyway.

"I welcome any change that's going to allow better communications between Via and ourselves," he said.

A spokesperson for Raitt did not confirm that timeline but said Raitt was taking the issue seriously. "Minister Raitt understands Minister Baird's concern, and our office has discussed the matter with the Chair of the Board. The Minister expects more from VIA going forward," spokesperson Jana Régimbal said.

Baird's remarks came after a back-and-forth between the city and Via Rail about whom to blame for a signal malfunction at the Fallowfield Road railway crossing. Via originally said an OC Transpo bus was to blame but backed away from that claim on Thursday.

Baird said that was "the last straw."

There have been at least a dozen signal malfunctions at Barrhaven railway crossings since last September's bustrain collision that killed six people.

Baird said the challenges for Via have been two-fold: Via has to deal with the technical problems, and it must communicate effectively with the public about the problems.

"The acting head of Via said he would take personal responsibility. Frankly, two or three weeks, Via's actions have been unacceptable," Baird said.

"If you can't operate the technical capacities of a rail crossing, let alone the simple engagement with the public in an honest, transparent, expeditious basis, I don't think you're qualified to run the railways."

Liberal transport critic David McGuinty said it's "very rich" for Baird to blame Via Rail entirely when a 2013 auditor general's report looking at rail safety provided a "scathing indictment" of the government.

Saturday

10/05/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Via Rail blames train delays on Transport Canada orders.

Via Rail trains travelling through Barrhaven were expected to be delayed up to an hour Friday night because of orders from Transport Canada, the railway announced. Via Rail, which has come under fire in Ottawa for more than a dozen reported malfunctions recently at Barrhaven crossings, issued a statement at 9:20 p.m. regarding the latest disruption. Spokeswoman Mylène Bélanger said "instructions" from Transport Canada regarding Barrhaven railway crossings mean that there will be delays along the Smiths Falls Subdivision line. Trains are also operating at a slower speed, meaning warning devices at crossings will be going off for longer as well. "VIA Rail apologizes for any inconvenience this situation may cause," Bélanger said. A Transport Canada spokesman couldn't immediately explain what orders had been issued. The latest Via Rail disruption almost immediately got the attention of Mayor Jim Watson online. "I will ask our staff to get yet another explanation from VIA - I share your frustration," he tweeted at a resident asking about delays at Fallowfield Station on Friday evening. Via Rail is due to report to Watson and the rest of council next week an external engineering investigation regarding signals at six Barrhaven railway crossings reportedly going into fail-safe mode at higher frequencies than usual.

Via names new CEO to 5-year term

Baird urges quick action on Barrhaven rail malfunctions

Via Rail has a new chief executive, less than two weeks after Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird called for new leadership at the Crown corporation.

Yves Desjardins-Siciliano has been appointed to a five-year term as Via Rail president and CEO, Transport Minister Lisa Raitt announced on Sunday.

The announcement came less than 48 hours after Raitt issued a six-month emergency directive to address the "immediate threat" to rail safety caused by repeated malfunctions at six Via Rail crossings in Barrhaven.

The order, which lays out expected operating practices for Via to follow, will be in effect until Nov. 9 or until Via determines the problem and how to fix it.

"The health and safety of Canadians is our top priority. I've expressed my displeasure with the situation to Via," said Raitt in an email.

The ongoing signal problems in Barrhaven will be one of the major issues confronting Desjardins-Siciliano as he assumes the top job.

An experienced lawyer, Desjardins-Siciliano had been Via's chief corporate and legal officer and corporate secretary since 2010. In that job, he was responsible for managing major capital projects and public affairs, as well as legal matters, risk management and the governance of Via's board of directors.

The new chief executive said in a statement it is an "honour and a privilege" to be chosen for the job. "The task ahead is to ensure that intercity passenger rail continues to play a key role in the economic prosperity of Canada," Desjardins-Siciliano said in the released comments.

Desjardins-Siciliano replaces Steve Del Bosco, a longtime Via employee who had been interim president and CEO since January.

The appointment comes after Baird, the member of Parliament for Ottawa West-Nepean and a former transportation minister, called for new leadership at Via Rail due to its handling of the signal malfunctions at Barrhaven rail crossings.

On Sunday, a spokesman for Baird said the minister welcomed the change of leadership at the Crown corporation, and called on Desjardins-Siciliano to quickly address the Barrhaven issues.

"The new CEO's first order of business must be to fix the technical issues that have plagued Barrhaven crossings, which have frustrated local residents for months," spokesman Adam Hodge said in a statement.

"Open communication with those residents and city officials on VIA's actions is equally paramount," he said.

"Via must rebuild its trust among the community, whose faith has been shaken by its lack of progress on these issues." When Baird made his initial comments, others pointed out that a permanent chief executive had been set to be named soon anyway. Liberal transport critic David McGuinty accused Baird of trying to score political points and deflect blame.

Del Bosco, as planned, will now resume his previous job as Via's chief commercial planning officer, according to a Via statement.

"On behalf of the board of directors, I wish to thank Mr. Del Bosco for his commitment to the corporation and, in particular, for answering the call with professionalism and dedication over the last five months," said Paul G. Smith, chair of Via Rail's board of directors.

There have been at least a dozen malfunctions since the tragic bus crash last September between an OC Transpo and a Via Rail train at one of the Barrhaven crossings that killed six people.

Although the train signals worked properly that day, the accident has left some residents of the south end community anxious, a sentiment heightened by the rail crossing glitches.

Under the Railway Safety Act, the transport minister can issue an emergency directive if she is concerned about an immediate threat to the safety and security of rail operations. The directive can be for six months or until the problems are fixed. It can be extended for another six months if necessary.

Transport Canada had already issued on April 10 safety warnings for the six crossings then lifted them two weeks later for four of the crossings - Fallowfield, Jockvale, Greenbank and Strandherd roads - when the problems were resolved and it was decided flagmen were no longer needed in person at the crossings. The orders remained for the other two crossings - Transitway and Woodroffe - and now all six will be under the emergency directive.

Jana Regimbal, a spokeswoman for Raitt, said the minister decided to step in with the emergency directive now because the false activation of the warnings systems at the six crossings continues and the cause remains unknown.

Via said Transport Canada's order for the Barrhaven railway means there will be delays of about 10 minutes along the line that runs out to Smith Falls.

Trains are also operating at a slower speed, meaning warning devices at crossings will be going off for longer.

Via Rail is expected to report to Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson and the rest of council this week with the results of an external engineering investigation into signals at the Barrhaven crossings. The Directive's Conditions: At Woodroffe and Transitway crossings, Via must ensure:

A flag person is on site before the arrival of all freight and passenger trains;

Trains do not cross the intersection until two flag persons - one on each side of the train - are in place to provide manual protection for pedestrians and motorists;

Flag persons remain in place until the train has completely cleared the crossing.

At Fallowfield, Greenbank, Jockvale roads and Strandherd Drive, Via Rail must ensure trains only cross the intersection after the warning system has been activated and the gate arms have been horizontal for at least five seconds before a train arrives.

At all six crossings, Via Rail must ensure that the warning system deactivates correctly and the state of the warning system is reported to the Rail Traffic Controller.

How Via Rail says it's fixing the signal problems in Barrhaven
Electrical equipment's been replaced, wind brackets on gates changed, computerized systems updated, and cameras will be installed by the train company, writes
MICHAEL WOODS

What is the problem?

Over the past few months, signals at railway crossings in Barrhaven have gone into fail-safe mode - lights flash, bells ring and gates lower, even though there's no train present - more often than normal. There have been at least a dozen occurrences in the past few months. Via officials stress there was never any safety risk for the public, just "huge inconvenience." Via commissioned independent reports from three consulting firms looking into the root causes of the glitches. Those reports were submitted a couple of weeks ago and Via presented council with a plan on Thursday.

Why is this happening in Barrhaven?

There's an unusually high concentration of crossings within a short distance in Barrhaven (six within less than six kilometres), and traffic volume at certain intersections has increased by 40 per cent in the past three years. More than 20,000 cars and as many as 21 trains a day cross at Woodroffe and Fallowfield, according to Dennis Pinsonneault, Via's chief customer experience and operating officer. The proximity of Fallowfield station and the Fallowfield Road signals being connected with city traffic lights also complicate matters.

What is causing the signals to go into fail-safe mode when they shouldn't?

There's no single cause of the problem. Via contractor Railterm's vice-president Aaron Branston said the independent reports found causes falling into four categories: electrical (contaminants in the track including water and salt, interference from outside hydro power), operational (interconnected crossing signal circuits), mechanical (gate motor problems and misalignments, damaged and broken gates), and software (circuit board failure). Via has said the confluence of many of these factors hadn't happened before this winter.

What changes have been made already?

Branston said about two-thirds of the measures to mitigate future glitches have already been completed. For example: at the Woodroffe and Transitway crossings, electrical equipment has been replaced, wind brackets on gates have been changed, and computerized systems have been replaced. At Jockvale and Strandherd, signal frequencies and train speeds have been changed; since then, there have been no glitches. Via has asked Railterm to increase the frequency of inspections, and conducted a detailed investigation into every occurrence of fail-safe mode.

What changes are coming?

Most of the remaining work will be done by the end of June. Cameras will be installed at Woodroffe, Fallowfield and Transitway crossings by then, and at the remaining three crossings by end of summer. Railterm will conduct several preventive maintenance tests, normally conducted over an eight-year period, within the next 30 days. Via, along with Transport Canada, will conduct a mandated "detailed safety assessment" a year early. There will also be personnel posted nearby at peak hours (6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday) for faster maintenance responses. Longer-term, Via plans to build a siding track between Ottawa and Fallowfield stations to reduce congestion.

When will this be finished?

Former Via Rail chief operating officer John Marginson has been brought in to supervise the work. Chief executive Yves Desjardins-Siciliano said efforts are proceeding at full speed so the work will be completed by the time Transport Canada's six-month emergency directive to Via finishes in November, if not sooner. Under that directive, trains must travel at reduced speeds and flag persons must be stationed at the six Barrhaven crossings. Constructing the siding track could take until next summer, depending on next winter's weather.

Friday 16/05/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

New Via CEO vows to fix rail crossings and restore public trust

Via Rail's new chief executive vowed on Thursday to restore the public's trust in Barrhaven rail crossings as officials unveiled a long-awaited plan to fix the signal problems that have raised the ire of politicians and the public.

In his fourth day on the job, Yves Desjardins-Siciliano told a crowd that included Mayor Jim Watson, councillors, city staff and assembled media at city hall that he's committed to improving communication between Via Rail and the city and public.

"At the end of the day, Via Rail is a public service, and we're here to serve the public," he said. "I have absolute confidence that Mayor Watson and local representatives will take advantage of our openness and come to me with any issues."

Desjardins-Siciliano was appointed on Sunday to replace interim chief executive Steve Del Bosco, whose leadership was criticized by Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird after continued signal problems at Barrhaven crossings. The new CEO said that level of scrutiny is "totally appropriate" and comes with the job.

"I think public officials do their job when they call other public officials to account for their management of affairs. I accept that pressure," he said, adding that he has already felt the "warm intensity" of local politicians Watson, Baird and Pierre Poilievre, and of his boss, Transport Minister Lisa Raitt.

"I can feel the heat of their breath on my neck."

Desjardins-Siciliano and senior rail staff outlined a plan to fix the problem of signals going into "fail-safe mode" - when signals are activated even though there's no train or one has already passed - more often than usual.

The plan follows three reports that independent consulting firms did for Via regarding the problem. VIA Rail contractor Railterm's vice-president Aaron Branston said about two-thirds of the plan has already been done, with most of the remaining work to be completed by July.

The remaining measures include installing cameras at the Fallowfield, Transitway and Woodroffe crossings, increasing the frequency of regular inspections and installing an electronic defect tracking system to detect trends.

In the longer term, Via will build a new siding track between Ottawa and Fallowfield stations to reduce false activations due to train traffic congestion.

To supervise the fixes, Desjardins-Siciliano said, he's bringing former Via Rail chief operating officer John Marginson out of retirement. "He and I will be talking every day," he said.

Desjardins-Siciliano stressed that although it was a "huge inconvenience" to have gates down when no train was approaching, or when one had already left, "at no moment was public safety at risk."

However, Watson said that until the public's confidence in the crossings returns, there is still a problem to deal with.

"While the president of Via might be technically correct, the fact of the matter is there is this uncertainty when people are crossing those crossings in the Barrhaven area."

Desjardins-Siciliano acknowledged that Via could have done a better job explaining the situation to people.

"For that miscommunication, I apologize. But I'd rather fail on a communication matter than fail on an operating matter."

Watson said he was "cautiously optimistic" after Thursday's presentation, but was quick to add that "actions are going to speak louder than words."

Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder, who has been a fierce critic of Via Rail in recent months, said she heard a lot more answers on Thursday than in Via's briefing last month, which left her with mostly questions.

Via Rail CEO hires John Marginson as railway's new fixer.

Former chief operating officer tackles signal problems at crossings, writes Michael Woods.

When Yves Desjardins-Siciliano became Via Rail's chief executive this month, one of the first things he did was call John Marginson.

Marginson, 62, retired as Via's chief operating officer two years ago after 40 years in the rail industry. But fixing the recurring signal problems at railway crossings in Barrhaven, which shook public confidence and infuriated local politicians, was near the top of the new CEO's to-do list. He tapped Marginson as the man to oversee the fixes. Less than 48 hours later, Marginson left his home in Aurora, Ont., and has since been in Barrhaven as senior adviser to the president and CEO. He sat down with the Citizen at Fallowfield Station Thursday to talk about how he's working to fix the signals, restore public confidence in the crossings and improve communication with the city. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q How closely were you following the Barrhaven situation while you were retired, and what did you make of it at the time?

A I occasionally would do a Via search on Google News, so I was somewhat familiar. I found it troubling because I know what a great company Via is, I know how safety-conscious the company is. So it was a little troubling for me to read what I was reading and not be able to do anything.

Q A So How far has it's gone it gone well. so The far? two objectives that I wanted to achieve are well on their way to

achievement. The first objective is to fix the problem and re-establish the confidence of the users of the crossings. And the second objective is to reinforce the communications aspect.

Q The problems in Barrhaven are complex; Via contractor RailTerm mentioned four categories of issues. But if you could distil it, how would you describe what the problem is and how do you go about fixing it?

A It is difficult to distil it down into a couple of problems. Via called in expert companies and asked them to turn over every stone, and they came up with 131 issues. We're tackling all of them. We have almost 90 actions completed and by early July we'll have 125. We're already seeing improvements. I was looking at some of the performance statistics for Jockvale and Strandherd, and they're performing very well. Greenbank has had a couple of problems; we think we know what they are and we're preparing the fix for those. The other two, Fallowfield and Woodroffe, those are the ones that are a little more complex. If I was to point at one category, it's the electrical category. Mechanically, the systems seem to be working well. The software issues are very minor. Operational errors can occur, but they also are extremely rare. So really the category we've spent most of our time on, and the one that we have the most to do yet, is on the electrical side.

Q There are reports of a problem Wednesday night at Woodroffe crossing. What happened?

A Very interestingly enough, I was on that locomotive. One of the locomotive engineers had mentioned some of his observations, so I wanted to meet him personally. I got into the cab of the locomotive, we had a very quick chat and then he started to proceed toward Woodroffe eastbound. Essentially, there is a feature in the cab of the locomotive that he will key in a remote activation of the crossing. He then has 60 seconds to get to the actual main track. Last night, he didn't get to the main track in 60 seconds. When that happens, the gates believe it was a false activation and the gates will start to come up. That's exactly what happened last night: the gates started to come up. Just as they were coming up, seven seconds later he got onto the main track. Now, the main track detects that the train is there, so the gates go back down again. The system performed exactly as it's supposed to perform ... the locomotive didn't move quite quickly enough. Q Why was that? A When you're crossing Woodroffe, you have to also contact the flag people who are at that crossing, so it takes a little extra time to contact the foreman of those flag people and request clearance to proceed. That, probably along with me being in the cab and introducing myself, we went past the 60 seconds.

Q How do you restore public confidence in the crossings?

A The simple way is make the system work. You could have many, many, many days of problem-free operations, and you have one day where there's a little glitch and your many days of rebuilding the public confidence is destroyed.

Rail staff in Barrhaven called police about track

Barrhaven residents weren't the only ones concerned about safety around railway tracks earlier this year. Via Rail workers were also worried and asked police for help.

Railway signal malfunctions were being reported frequently in April when Via Rail asked Ottawa police if officers could help make workers feel safer, according to Ottawa police documents released under freedom of information legislation. Via workers were posted to crossings, in part to make sure cars stopped when necessary.

"Our workers at the various crossings feel unsafe when the crossing signals are functioning and they are positioned on the roadway ensuring vehicles are stopped by holding hand held stop signs," Via Rail police Insp. Fernand Breau wrote in an email to Ottawa police Acting Insp. Mark Patterson.

"Quite often vehicles accelerate rendering the safety in peril as soon crossing gate is lifted even when red flashing lights are operating."

Ottawa police were investigating whether tampering was a factor in the malfunctions at the time, but West Division officers also had experience being called about reported glitches. By April, police had responded to at least 35 malfunction calls, an internal memo shows.

Later, Patterson wrote an email within Ottawa police saying Via didn't consider paying for paid duty officers to be an option. The question was raised when a vehicle went through a crossing too fast, caused an issue with the sensor and the crossing arm hitting a vehicle, Patterson wrote.

Ultimately, said Ottawa police director of communications John Steinbachs by email on Thursday, paid duty resources were provided at rail crossings only on March 14, June 14 and June 15. The cost to Via was \$3,900, Steinbachs said, adding police gave an estimate for additional shifts but "a decision was made not to use dedicated resources."

"Given the malfunctions, direction was given to patrol officers to increase their awareness of the Via Rail crossings as part of regular patrols. No costs associated with that work have been billed to Via Rail," Steinbachs said.

To address staff safety concerns, Via spokesman Jacques C. Gagnon said increased police patrols were requested but they're no longer required. Gagnon said Via didn't pay Ottawa police or the city for that.

City will retire fatal bus route number

Crash victims to get a monument

The city will retire OC Transpo Route 76 in recognition of those who died in last fall's fatal bus-train collision near Barrhaven.

Mayor Jim Watson said he has been consulting with the families involved for the past two months to determine how best to remember their loved ones.

"The number 76 obviously had very sad connotations," he said in an interview, adding that he's heard from passengers and bus drivers asking for the number to be changed.

"There was a consensus amongst all the families that they would like to see that number retired, and we're respecting their wishes."

The route, which travels between Barrhaven and downtown, will be renamed Route 72 when OC Transpo's fall schedule comes into effect in September.

Watson said the families also agreed on the creation of a commemorative plaque or marker at a to-be-determined location.

The Sept. 18 bus-train crash at a level crossing near the Fallowfield Transitway station crash sheared the front off the Route 76 doubledecker bus and killed the driver, David Woodard, and passengers Connor Boyd, Kyle Nash, Karen Krzyzewski, Rob More and Michael Bleakney.

"I see that bus all the time, and it is a constant reminder ... it gives me a sickening feeling in my stomach," said Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder. "So for those who were on the bus or who lost family members and friends, it has to be difficult for them."

Flags at city buildings will fly half-mast on the one-year anniversary of the collision. There will also be a minute of silence at the previous day's transit commission meeting.

Harder and transit commission chair Coun. Diane Deans will work with the families in the coming months to determine what the monument should be, and the best place for it.

Watson and Harder said it won't be at the site of the crash, which is a busy level crossing.

"That would not be appropriate, and it would be dangerous," Harder said. She said there have been discussions about where to put the commemoration. She didn't get into details, but said it should be in a place where visitors can have some privacy.

Watson said the general desire is to have it in the Barrhaven area.

The mayor said there were other ideas raised, particularly whether the families wanted the city to organize any sort of memorial service at one of the churches nearby. However, there wasn't consensus on that, he said.

"My sense is that the families some may have their churches host a memorial service and others will grieve privately, and we fully respect that," he said.

Four lawsuits have been filed against the city and Woodard's estate since the crash. More and Bleakney's families have filed lawsuits, as have two surviving passengers.

The cause of the crash has not yet been determined.

Via alerted to 223 signal faults near Fallowfield in five years

One of the more piercing questions since the fatal OC Transpo crash with a train almost a year ago has not been the competency of bus service, but the performance of Via Rail.

While there's no indication any blame lies with the railway, the attack-line to an anxious public has been this:

How well does Via run a railroad, when it can't run a crossing signal?

Using the access-to-information law, the Citizen has obtained 65 pages of documents that finally put the story of the wonky road-rail signals in Barrhaven through a longer lens.

The numbers confirm Via has known for years that a number of the six signals in the immediate area around Fallowfield station have needed repeated attention, sometimes several times a month. A tabulation from 2009 to 2013 shows Via responded to at least 223 incidents involving defective operations at six well-travelled intersections: Woodroffe, the OC Transitway, Fallowfield, Greenbank, Jockvale and Strandherd.

The crossing at Strandherd Drive needed the most attention, at 63 responses, while Fallowfield Road was second, at 43. As Via claimed privacy and third-party exemptions on almost every page - in effect, blacking out information- it is possible the actual five-year number is higher.

"It does seem unusually high," said David Jeanes, the former president of Transport Action Canada, which monitors the country's rail industry.

"With that number of malfunctions, whether safety is preserved or not, it is a major inconvenience to the motorists. Those crossings are all on heavily travelled roads."

The numbers, in a way, are hardly shocking. Barrhaven commuters know all too well the situation has been unpredictable and long-standing.

In April, area MP and senior cabinet minister John Baird was furious after a spate of reports about the sporadic malfunctioning of signals not far from the site where six people were killed in September 2013.

He demanded action within a week, even if it meant camping out in the railway corridor 24/7.

The Citizen reported then there had been at least 10 or 11 reports since the crash, a day when the signals were operating correctly.

In fact, the number was certainly higher: The documents indicate 14 reports of defects in the three months ending Dec. 31.

Pressed by Transport Minister Lisa Raitt, Via has responded with a set of extraordinary measures, reportedly the only cluster of intersections in Canada to get this kind of attention.

Via personnel or contractors are actually standing by the intersections to ensure the lights and barriers are working when a train approaches.

"Think about how much they've spent on troubleshooting those signals," remarked Jeanes.

The "bird's eye view" of the cause of the problem comes back to Via's standard answer: The signals are fairly complex devices designed to go into "failsafe" mode whenever a monitor detects a problem.

"Fail-safe" is a term meaning the lights and barriers will be activated even if a train is not present or on the way. And, indeed, according to the maintenance reports, this accounts for at least 75 per cent of the 200plus reports.

The records released to the Citizen provide only the briefest summary of the nature of the 223 calls. Among the reasons crews were called out: lights operating, gate not clearing; lights flashing continuously; shopping cart left on tracks, activating signals; gate broken; one gate reported as not descending.

While cold weather seemed to complicate things, often there appeared to be little rhyme or reason why the signals would malfunction with mysterious frequency, sometimes five and six times a month. There were 62 incidents catalogued in 2011, 61 in 2012, but only 36 in 2013.

The intersection of the tracks with the Transitway, which runs parallel to Woodroffe, had the least number of calls during the five-year stretch, at seven, but three during 2013.

After a barrage of complaints and a communications mess, Via turned the page in May with a new CEO, a new point man for Ottawa, a public apology, a detailed explanation for the repeated failures and a fix-it plan.

(Causes were broken down into electrical, mechanical, software or operational issues, ranging from salt and water damage to lightning impacts to defective rails, gate motor problems and faulty circuit boards.)

Via spokesman Jacques Gagnon said this week about 99 per cent of the to-do list is complete. "It's a fairly unique location in Canada where you have so many crossings in such a close area," he said this week.

"A minor glitch at one can cause the (other) crossings to go down at a moment's notice."

An update is planned Aug. 18 in a meeting with Mayor Jim Watson and Coun. Jan Harder.

Harder said she's not surprised by the figure 223 for the number of signal malfunctions in the past five years. "There was a time when we were having issues on a daily basis."

But she stresses that the level of trust between Via and the community has been rebuilt since May. "The difference has been night and day. I'm pleased with the level of communication, which is giving me confidence about the level of attention."

There are plans to separate Greenbank and Strandherd from rail with underpasses, she said.

Investigators have already reported the train, Via Train 51, left Ottawa Station at 8:32 that morning. The crossing signals were activated 47 seconds before the impact with OC's route 76. The train was travelling 47 m.p.h. at the time and train emergency brakes were activated two seconds before the crash.

Friday 22/08/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Bus Route 72 will replace Route 76

OC Transpo's Route 76 bus will make its last run on Aug. 29, the city said Thursday. The city announced earlier this summer it is retiring Route 76, which travels between Barrhaven and downtown, out of respect for the six people who died in last September's bus-train collision. It will be replaced by the new Route 72, which will start service on Sept. 2. The city decided to change the number after consulting with the victims' families, who all agreed on the move.

11/09/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

OC Transpo to honour Via crash victims

OC Transpo buses will pull over at 8:47 a.m. on Sept. 18 for a moment of silence — one year after a driver and five passengers were killed when a double-decker bus collided with a Via passenger train.

Flags at all city buildings will be lowered to half-mast that day, while members of OC Transpo's peer support network will be at bus garages and other facilities to support operators, said Craig Watson, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279.

The union will also be publicizing the contact information for its employee assistance program and will let operators wear shorts and green shirts that day in a nod to driver Dave Woodard, whose favourite colour was green.

Besides Woodard, the crash killed passengers Michael Bleakney, 57, Karen Krzyzewski, 53, Rob More, 35, Connor Boyd and Kyle Nash, both 21.

The city announced last month that it was retiring Route 76 out of respect for those who were killed in the 2013 collision.

The new Route 72 commenced service on Sept. 2.

City remembers bus-train crash and its victims

Flags will fly at half-mast at city buildings throughout Ottawa on Thursday, and bus drivers will pull over to hold a moment of silence at 8:47 a.m., marking the first anniversary of the bus-train crash that killed six people.

The city began commemorating the anniversary of the deaths at a transit commission meeting on Wednesday, when a moment of silence was held following emotional remarks from Mayor Jim Watson, Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder and transit chair Diane Deans.

"They were good, honest, decent residents of our city, some so young that most of their lives were yet to be explored, others taken from us while they were in the primes of their lives," Watson said. "And all taken from their families far too soon."

The people who died were driver Dave Woodard, 45, and passengers Michael Bleakney, 57, Karen Krzyzewski, 53, Rob More, 35, Connor Boyd and Kyle Nash, both 21.

A transit meeting had been scheduled for that morning last year but was cancelled when news of that the double-decker bus had crashed into the side of a Via passenger train made its way to city hall.

"For me, Sept. 18 was one of the darkest days of my life. I will never forget the sadness and grief that swept through this city. My heart continues to break for those families who lost loved ones," Deans said.

The tragedy continues to reach all of Barrhaven, Harder said.

"I know that anyone I talk to, wherever I go, people know somebody that was on the 76," she said, of the Route 76 bus, which was replaced by Route 72 earlier this month.

"It's deeply personal ... and that's why I'm pleased that we're having a moment of silence today and that we're doing what the families want, which is lowering the flags tomorrow, and that's all," Harder said, adding she's working with the families of those who died about a memorial in the future.

Flags at city buildings will be at half-mast from sunrise to sunset.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279 president Craig Watson said the city and union are trying to respect the families' wishes for the anniversary. "I think whatever their wishes are is the best way to handle it," said Watson, who is frequently in contact with Woodard's family.

To remember Woodard, whose favourite colour was green, some drivers will wear green Thursday, Watson said.

As well, if drivers can safely stop at 8:47 a.m. they will pull over for a moment of silence.

There will be coffee houses and peer supporters ready for drivers who need support, Watson said, and drivers will watch to see if passengers need help. "Drivers will be looking and offering any assistance as needed," Watson said.

The Transportation Safety Board will give an update next Wednesday on its investigation into the crash.

Friday 07/11/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Driver, VIA operator acted properly in Fallowfield incident: OC Transpo boss

It was a sight that would leave many Ottawans anxious: An OC Transpo bus sitting past the safety barrier, closer than comfort to a passing Via Rail train.

The incident, captured in a photo and circulated online, took place at the Fallowfield Road level crossing on Thursday morning — along the same route as last year's crash, in which six people were killed when a bus plowed through a gate and struck the side of a Via train.

However on Thursday, after reviewing the incident, officials emerged to say they were satisfied that both the bus driver and the Via Rail operator had handled things properly.

"We know exactly what occurred out there today," said OC Transpo general manager John Manconi said.

Manconi said Thursday afternoon after Transpo, Via and city traffic engineers had time to go over the relevant material in the incident.

The bus was not speeding. "We had a manager on the vehicle on the second level (as a passenger). He witnessed everything."

The Transpo official said the bus was caught in a traffic lineup at a red light. The light turned green, traffic started to advance slowly, but the lights turned amber before the bus was able to cross the tracks.

"The operator went (past a painted stop line for buses) and made the decision to brake, as you have to make a decision when a light turns amber on you, and stopped well in advance of the tracks. I know some of the pictures out there look like it was very close (but) estimates are it was about 12 to 15 feet from the tracks.

"He absolutely made the right decision."

Officials are satisfied and don't intend to investigate further, Manconi said.

Earlier in the day, Craig Watson, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union local, said the driver of the OC Transpo bus "did everything he needed to do for the safety of the passengers."

Meanwhile, Via said in a news release that railway crossing signals at Jockvale and Greenbank roads malfunctioned Thursday morning after an "electronic component" failed.

The crossings went into "fail-safe mode", crossing lights and bells activated, and gates lowered. Repairs were made and the crossing signals returned to normal operation.

Monday 10/11/2014 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Warning on bus safety at Via crossing

Transport Canada wants changes at Fallowfield station after close call

The danger of stopping under the railway crossing gate arms puts the road users at threat of coming into contact with an approaching train.

Transport Canada says there's a threat to safety at the Fallowfield Road railway crossing, after an OC Transpo bus stopped under the crossing gate arm close to a passing Via Rail train.

In a letter to transit general manager John Manconi dated Friday, a railway safety inspector for Transport Canada said he believes "a threat to safe railway operations exists" at the crossing.

"The danger of stopping under the railway crossing gate arms puts the road users at threat of coming into contact with an approaching train," railway safety inspector John Valencik said in the letter.

"In addition, if a bus stops beyond a railway crossing gate and does not clear the other side of the crossing, there is also a threat that the bus can come into contact with a passing train."

On Thursday, an OC Transpo bus stopped under the railway crossing arm and, according to Valencik's letter, was "in close proximity to a passing Via train."

The incident was captured in a photo and circulated online.

The bus was along the same route as last fall's crash in which six people were killed after an OC Transpo bus drove through the gate and struck the side of a Via train.

The Transport Canada letter asks the city to advise by Nov. 21 how it intends to resolve "these hazards or conditions."

In response, the city is reviewing its procedures and directives for drivers approaching railway crossings, city manager Kent Kirkpatrick said in a memo.

The city is also working with Public Works to "assess all aspects of the specific railway crossing at Fallowfield Road," he said. City staff will "identify any possible mitigation options" and respond to Transport Canada's notice by the deadline, he said.

After reviewing the incident, officials said Thursday that both the bus driver and the Via Rail operator had handled things properly.

Manconi said Thursday afternoon that the bus was not speeding, and the operator stopped well in advance of the tracks after a traffic light turned amber.

He said officials were satisfied and didn't intend to investigate further.

The Transport Canada letter said that a "threat," under the Railway Safety Act, is "a hazard or condition that could reasonably be expected to develop into a situation in which a person could be injured or made to be ill or damage could be caused to the environment or property."

Fix needed for safety 'threat' at rail crossings

Transport Canada warning hints at possible underpass or overpass

What more has to happen for this city to separate the railway crossings in the growing community of South Nepean as was originally intended?

A Transport Canada inspector has warned that passengers, both on a city bus and a train, along with the bus driver could have been at risk in an incident last week at the Fallowfield rail crossing.

The September 2013 tragic crash between an OC Transpo bus and a Via Rail train near Woodroffe Avenue resulted in six deaths and dozens injured. Last week the community experienced a near miss when a public transit bus came into contact with the rail-crossing arm "in close proximity" to an approaching train.

And now, a Transport Canada inspector has informed the city that the Fallowfield crossing is a "threat to safe railway operations," and that at last week's event, "bus passengers, train passengers and the operator could have been at risk."

The federal department gave the city two weeks "until Nov. 21" to come up with a way to "resolve these hazards or conditions." City officials refused to comment on Monday after the letter arrived by registered-mail Friday evening. So much for OC Transpo boss John Manconi's assurances that everyone involved in the incident behaved properly and that the city was so satisfied it didn't intend to investigate further.

City manager Kent Kirkpatrick wrote to councillors on Saturday that "OC Transpo is currently reviewing its procedures and directives to drivers approaching railway crossings and is also working with Public Works staff to assess all aspects of the specific railway crossing at Fallowfield Road."

What driver procedures need to change? The city already commissioned a study about whether transit buses should stop at all railway crossings, and the response from that report was a resounding no. The (albeit dated) research shows that making buses automatically stop at crossings actually increases the chances of an accident.

What the Transport Canada missive is surely hinting at is the need for a separated grade crossing (although the lack of specifics about what exactly at the crossing is a "threat" to safety is a bit frustrating).

Veteran Ottawa politician Bob Chiarelli, for one, thinks the measure is well overdue. Asked about whether he thought a level crossing was a mistake, the Ontario energy minister said he was "always very concerned" about that intersection when he was mayor.

The city, federal government and Via "should just bite the bullet," Chiarelli said. "They should put their heads together, and they should grade separate those facilities."

He even hinted that the provincial government might throw in some cash for the project if asked: "We work with municipal governments across the province to support their transit projects," he said. "There's no request at this time."

Chiarelli's concern over the at-grade crossing is a tad puzzling considering he was the mayor when council unanimously agreed in 2004 to scrap its original plans to build two underpasses at Woodroffe and Fallowfield after an estimated \$40-million price tag ballooned to \$110 million due to poor soil conditions.

Canadian National Railway had insisted it "would not permit permanent at-grade crossings at Fallowfield Road and Woodroffe Avenue" because of "current and future safety concerns" over the amount of cross-track traffic at those locations.

But somehow, city staff convinced CN that a wider Woodroffe, with an adjacent Transitway extension, would be safe enough with a crossing and signal, especially as the opening of the Fallowfield Via station meant the trains would move through more slowly than in the past. If Transport Canada had any objections, it didn't voice them at the time.

Concerns were raised again in 2010, when Via took over the track from CN, and commissioned a safety assessment report on the crossing. The report's authors stated that the volume of traffic indicated the need for an underpass or overpass, suggesting the city re-evaluate a requirement for grade separation.

If we're looking for blame, there's plenty to go around: the Chiarelli-led council that allowed the at-grade crossing in the first place (although Chiarelli pointed out he "wasn't mayor forever" and vowed the crossing would have been grade separated if he had been in power longer); CN for acquiescing back in 2004; the city, which may or may not have revisited the amount of cross-track traffic after Via raised the concern in 2010; the federal government, which seems to have few if any standards for when a crossing as to be grade-separated (who's in charge, anyway?).

But assigning blame won't fix the problem. What we need is a permanent solution to the ongoing concern over these rail crossings.

Thursday

13/11/2014

Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

Need rail crossing help, says mayor

All partners have to come to the table. We can't do it all ourselves. It's a very challenging question for municipalities.

When it comes to building overpasses or underpasses at Via Rail crossings, Mayor Jim Watson is clear about one thing: the city won't be able to pay the \$100 million-plus price tag on its own.

"There's certainly a level of frustration and concern," said Watson of the ongoing issues over Via crossings in Barrhaven. But if the crossings do have to be grade-separated, "all partners have to come to the table. We can't do it all ourselves. It's a very challenging question for municipalities."

The mayor spoke for the first time Wednesday about an alarming-sounding letter from a Transport Canada inspector to the city in regards to a close call last week when an OC Transit bus came into contact with the rail-crossing arm "in close proximity" to an approaching train at the Fallowfield crossing. The federal inspector wrote that the crossing is a "threat to safe railway operations," and that at last week's event, "bus passengers, train passengers and the operator could have been at risk."

(The 2013 crash of an OC Transpo bus and a Via train that killed six occurred at a nearby crossing, where the Transitway runs alongside Woodroffe Avenue.)

The federal department gave the city until Nov. 21 to come up with a way to "resolve these hazards or conditions." And Watson said he doesn't want to be "premature" in discussing options until he hears back from city manager Kent Kirkpatrick about what might be done to mitigate the worries about the Barrhaven crossings. Watson suggested that the city might investigate whether one solution might be activating the barrier sooner.

Via Rail officials have said in the past that Barrhaven is one of the only places in the country where the passenger train service runs right through a suburb. More than a decade ago, when the city was planning to widen Woodroffe, there was a plan to build underpasses at both the Fallowfield and Woodroffe, each wide enough to accommodate the roads and the Transitway.

But when poor soil conditions meant estimated costs would skyrocket from \$40 million to more than \$110 million, the city convinced Canadian National Railway (then-owner of the track) to accept at-grade crossings instead.

If the city had to find more than \$110 million on its own, "we couldn't do it," said Watson.

Fix needed for safety 'threat' at rail crossings

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22/11/2014 Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Fallowfield Road

City rejects changes to level crossings

Upcoming report could force a reassessment

Engineering experts studying the level rail crossings in Ottawa are recommending that the city and Via Rail reassess the need for grade separation at crossings in the Barrhaven area.

But until that report is released later this year, the city says it will do nothing different at the crossings.

News of the recommendation to study the grade-separated crossings was buried in a City of Ottawa letter to Transport Canada inspector John Valencik over a possible "threat to safety" that exists at the Fallowfield rail crossing.

On Nov. 6, an OC Transpo bus stopped just past the "stop bar" painted on the roadway, and came in contact with the activated crossing gate arms. About a minute later, a slow-moving Via train passed in front of the stationary bus.

That event led the Transport Canada inspector on Nov. 7 to warn the city in writing that "a threat to safe railway operations exists" at the crossing. The inspector gave the city until Nov. 21 to advise the federal agency how it intended to "resolve these hazards or conditions."

The city's response is to do nothing - or very little, other than taking minor steps such as re-painting the stop lines on the road for the buses (which has already been completed).

"We cannot concur with your opinion that a threat to railway safety existed based on the November 6th occurrence," city manager Kent Kirkpatrick wrote to Transport Canada in a seven-page letter.

In the city's opinion, while the bus crossed the stop line, "at no time was there any threat of the bus coming into contact with the passing train," wrote Kirkpatrick.

That might be true, but the city's response does not address whether the high-volume traffic over the crossings is generally safe. Nor, to be fair, is it clear whether the Transport Canada inspector was indicating in his original warning whether the crossing in question was a "threat to safety" to bus and train passengers at all times, or just during the Nov. 6 event.

But this may be a moot point if new recommendations due out by the end of this year call for gradeseparation at one or more of the Via level crossings in the Barrhaven area.

Kirkpatrick's letter refers to a "detailed safety assessment report" that the city and Via ordered up as part of the so-called "action plan" to deal with malfunctioning crossing signals in south Nepean.

According to Kirkpatrick, the city is "aware" that the draft report "recommends that consideration be given to conducting engineering and economic analysis studies to reassess grade separations variables and feasibility in this area."

This recommendation is hardly a surprise given that CN Rail, which owned the track prior to 2010, had wanted an overpass or underpass at both the Fallowfield and Woodroffe crossings back in 2001. The city convinced CN to drop its insistence on grade separation after the price for the crossings was estimated at more than \$110 million.

At the time, CN said grade-separation was required at intersections with high volumes of traffic measured by a "cross product," which is simply the number of trains going through the crossing each day multiplied by the number of vehicles using the road. When that number is more than 200,000, safety standards say it's time to separate the two streams of traffic.

Kirkpatrick's letter stated that the average daily traffic for Fallowfield is 21,766 vehicles based on a 2013 traffic count.

According to Via, at least 21 trains cross Fallowfield every day. That's a cross product of 457,086 - or more than twice the industry measure for required a grade-separated crossing.

Moodie rail crossing signals out of control

The warning signals at a level train crossing were out of control Wednesday in Ottawa's west end, this time on Moodie Drive near Fallowfield Road. Ottawa city officials sent out an announcement after the problem was noticed just after 10 a.m. that motorists should avoid the area. The cause was unknown and city officials were unable to say how long the problem would last.

Tuesday 09/06/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

Negligence on the part of Via Rail was a contributing cause of the crash between an OC Transpo bus and a passenger train, the City of Ottawa alleges in its first legal defence of the civil lawsuits filed in relation to the fatal accident.

The city is also claiming the damages being sought are excessive and asking that the lawsuits against the city and the estate of driver David Woodard be dismissed with costs.

In statements of defence in response to lawsuits filed by the families of late passengers Michael Bleakney and Rob More, the city denies there was "any negligence, breach of duty or want of care on its part" that contributed to the collision on Sept. 18, 2013, at a level crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station.

The crash killed Woodard and passengers Bleakney, More, Kyle Nash, Connor Boyd and Karen Krzyzewski. Bleakney and More's families are the only ones to have filed lawsuits against the city so far, although 10 surviving passengers have also sued. The city has yet to respond to any of those lawsuits.

Bleakney's family is seeking \$1.8 million in damages and More's family \$600,000.

The city's response defends Woodard as a "competent, trained and experienced driver" and maintains that the city took all reasonable steps to ensure he was capable of driving the double-decker bus in a "safe and prudent" manner. It also claims in the Bleakney statement of defence that despite all efforts Woodard was unable to avoid the collision.

In both statements, the city claims that it was not responsible for the design, maintenance, inspection or repair of the train tracks, the train crossing warning system, the train speed, the crossing bells, barricades or crossing signals. The city also says it complied with all instructions, orders and directives from Via Rail and Transport Canada with regard to the crossing and had no jurisdiction or authority to unilaterally alter the crossing.

It also alleges that the roadway design, signage, maintenance and traffic flow systems that are within the city's jurisdiction were the result of policy decisions exercised in good faith.

In both, the city says the "negligence of Via Rail and/or the operators of the Via Rail train" was a contributing cause of the collision.

But in the statement of defence to the Bleakney lawsuit, the city goes further, alleging that if Woodard didn't see or hear the approaching train, it was due to the negligence of the railway responsible for the track.

The city's position in the legal documents is at odds with a preliminary Transportation Safety Board report that indicated driver distraction and speed may have been factors in the deadly crash.

While Via Rail is still "familiarizing itself" with the city's court submission, "what we know is that the preliminary report following the investigation of the Transport Safety Board of Canada did not identify issues related to the train operation, the crossing signals or the tracks," according to an emailed statement from a Via official.

The safety board said it did not identify any issues with the operation of the train, the operation of the crossing signals or the condition of the track.

The crash investigators also stressed it would be wrong to assume there were only two factors that could have contributed to the collision and said their investigation is continuing.

The statements of defence recognize that reality, saying that the investigation into the collision is ongoing and "that the full particulars of the facts and circumstances surrounding the collision are unknown to them at this time."

As part of its defence, the city states that it maintained a reasonable system of inspection and maintenance of OC Transpo vehicles. The city denies there were any defects in the bus, but if there were, alleges it was the result of a "hidden or latent manufacturing defect or negligence" on the part of the bus manufacturer. The city further suggests that any judgment against it should be reduced by the amount of insurance benefits paid to the plaintiffs. The city also asks that it be released from any benefits the plaintiffs may receive from statutory accident benefits under an income continuation benefit plan, pension plan or sick leave plan. The lawyer for passenger Rob More's family said she wasn't surprised by anything in the city's legal filing.

"It's a very typical statement of defence for this type of action," said Éliane Lachaine, adding that it isn't unusual for a defendant to ask for a lawsuit to be dismissed.

Attempts to reach Via Rail and the lawyer for Bleakney's family were not immediately successful Monday.

Thursday 18/06/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

New lawsuit filed against city, Via Rail over crash

A new lawsuit has been filed against the city and Via Rail in the deadly crash between an OC Transpo bus and passenger train.

Passenger Carolyn Croteau alleges in a statement of claim filed Monday that she suffered broken ribs, leg lacerations, a concussion and head and neck pain after being thrown to the floor of the doubledecker bus after it hit the train on Sept. 18, 2013.

The collision between the No. 76 express bus and Via train at a level crossing near the Fallowfield transit station killed five passengers and bus driver David Woodard.

Croteau and her husband Dennis Croteau are suing for \$350,000 in damages.

This is the 13th known lawsuit filed against the city since the crash.

The estate of driver Woodard is also named as a defendant.

In their statement of claim, the Croteaus accuse the city, Via Rail and Woodard of negligence.

None of the allegations has been proven in court. The city, VIA Rail and Woodard's estate have yet to respond to the lawsuit.

According to the statement of claim, Croteau continues to suffer from "psychological impairment" as a result of the crash, including flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The statement of claim alleges she has had to undergo therapy and treatment as a result.

Thursday 25/06/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Greenbank Road

Council asks Via to stop whistles at Greenbank Road crossing

Barrhaven could soon be a lot quieter now that council has agreed to formally ask Via Rail trains to stop blowing whistles at the Greenbank Road crossing, where a temporary detour has been set up as part of a multi-year construction project.

The former Nepean council passed a bylaw 30 years ago to prohibit train whistling at the crossing, but after the detour opened earlier this year, Via recommended trains blow their whistles due to the shift of Greenbank Road. The construction includes widening the road and building a new grade-separated crossing.

Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder says the whistle now blows more than a dozen times a day and can be heard by thousands of people who live nearby, which is why she asked council to request an end to the practice until the construction project is completed at the end of 2017.

Via has said it would obey council's wishes so long as the city provided public notice of its intention to ban train whistles at the location.

A safety assessment reviewed by the city and Via confirms that whistling is not legally required at the temporary road detour on Greenbank.

Yet that wasn't enough to persuade Mayor Jim Watson, who, along with five councillors, dissented.

He said he was opting to err on the side of public safety because the area is confusing due to the changes in Greenbank's road alignment.

Another lawsuit in fatal bus-train collision

The family of a 21-year-old who died in September 2013 when an OC Transpo bus was hit by a Via Rail train in Barrhaven has become the latest to file a lawsuit against the City of Ottawa, Via Rail, train conductor Kevin McCardle and the estate of the deceased driver of the bus, David Woodard.

Parents Cynthia and Richard Nash, and Geoffrey Nash, the younger brother of the victim, Kyle Nash, filed suit on June 30, alleging that the defendants were negligent in their duties to properly protect the passengers in their care or to prevent the crash from occurring.

It's the first time McCardle, the train conductor, has been named in a lawsuit regarding the bus crash.

There have been 13 other known lawsuits filed against the city making similar allegations.

The City of Ottawa has maintained that there was never any negligence, breach of duty or want of care on its part in relation to the collision between a Via Rail train and an OC Transpo bus, No. 76 Express, in September 2013 at a level crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station.

The crash killed Nash and fellow passengers Michael Bleakney, Karen Krzyzewski, Connor Boyd and Rob More, as well as Woodard, the bus driver. Dozens of others were injured.

The Nash family alleges that Woodard, the driver, didn't keep a proper lookout, was driving dangerously, was distracted and/ or impaired and was insufficiently trained.

They also say the City of Ottawa didn't adequately ensure the safety of the rail crossing along the Transitway and allowed Woodard, whom they allege was in no condition to do so, to drive the bus.

The plaintiffs say McCardle was underqualified to drive the train, which the plaintiffs allege was not in proper condition, and failed to brake in time to avoid the collision.

Finally, the lawsuit calls on Via Rail for allegedly not warning its conductors to slow down and blow the train's whistle when approaching a railway crossing, and for failing to maintain the railway crossing, along with other allegations similar to those levelled against the conductor.

The Nash family is suing for more than \$675,000 in total damages.

According to the statement of claim, Cynthia Nash has chronic post-traumatic stress and depression, including flashbacks, as the result of her son's death. The statement alleges that it has affected her work with the federal public service, which may force her into early retirement.

Geoffrey Nash was unable to return to his post-secondary school in the wake of his younger brother's death, delaying his education by a year, according to the statement of claim.

None of the allegations has been proven in court. The defendants have 20 days to respond to the lawsuit.

Thursday 16/07/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Greenbank Road

Via to silence train whistle in Barrhaven

Via Rail has blown the whistle on blowing the whistle in Barrhaven. Passenger trains will no longer whistle at the Greenbank Road crossing as of this Saturday at 12:01 a.m., the rail company announced Wednesday. The move comes nearly a month after Ottawa city council agreed to formally ask that Via Rail trains to stop blowing whistles at the crossing, where a temporary detour has been set up as part of a multi-year construction project. Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder said last month that the whistle was blowing more than a dozen times a day and could be heard by thousands of people who live nearby, which is why she asked council to request an end to the practice until the construction project is completed at the end of 2017. In a statement, Via has said it was altering the practice out of respect for council's wishes. A safety assessment reviewed by the city and Via confirmed that whistling is not legally required at the temporary road detour on Greenbank.

Friday 14/08/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Via Rail has filed a \$4.2-million lawsuit against the City of Ottawa for damages to the train, tracks and injuries to their engineers after a deadly crash between an OC Transpo bus and one of their trains.

In the lawsuit, Via Rail alleges that city negligence is to blame for the crash between a Route 76 express bus and a Toronto-bound train near the Fallowfield Transitway station on the morning of Sept. 18, 2013.

The crash killed five passengers and bus driver David Woodard.

A preliminary investigation by the Transportation Safety Board concluded Woodard was driving above the speed limit and failed to stop for the warning lights and rail-lowered crossing arms before hitting the side of the train. The TSB also noted that video screens in the driver's area designed to allow Woodard to monitor passengers may have momentarily distracted him.

Among Via's allegations are that the city failed to ensure bus drivers reduced their speed upon approaching the railway crossing, failed to ensure the speed limit on the Transitway was adequate given the curve in the road before the tracks, and knew or ought to have known that the configuration of the Transitway was dangerous.

"Via Rail incurred significant business losses relating to the loss of use of its rolling stock involved in the collision and disruption to its passenger service," the lawsuit alleged.

The city previously accused Via Rail of negligence when it filed a third-party claim against the railway in a response to lawsuits filed by two of the victims' families. The city alleged in those claims that Via trains were approaching the crossing too fast and failed to implement adequate warning systems.

None of the allegations in either lawsuit have been proven in court. The city has yet to file a statement of defence to Via's claim.

Via is seeking \$4 million in damages from the city and the estate of driver Woodard for losses to their business and damage to the train and tracks and crossing.

They are also seeking to fully recover benefit payments made under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to engineers Kevin McCardle and Gregory McGrath, both of whom were injured and unable to return to work following the collision.

The lawsuit claimed \$142,841.12 in relation to McCardle and \$70,465.58 in relation to McGrath.

It is the 26th known lawsuit filed against the city since the crash.

The city will study grade-separated rail crossings at five locations in Nepean, city manager Kent Kirkpatrick confirmed this week in a letter to the Transportation Safety Board.

It comes within the 90-day timeline for response set by the TSB last December when it released its final report on the investigation of the Sept. 18, 2013, collision between an OC Transpo double-decker bus and Via passenger train that killed six and injured dozens.

In partnership with Via, the city will study the feasibility of grade separation at the level crossings at Woodroffe Avenue, Fallowfield Road and the Transitway, where the bus-train crash occurred.

The city will also look at the Merivale Road and Jockvale Road level crossings to have a complete understanding of all remaining level crossings in this part of Ottawa, Kirkpatrick wrote.

Level crossings at Greenbank Road, where construction of a new underpass is underway, and Strandherd Road, where grade separation is planned for construction between 2020 and 2025, will not be subject to the feasibility study, the city says.

The studies will include a review of all previous work related to these crossings, an analysis of current and projected traffic data, geotechnical work where required, recommendation on whether these crossings could be improved by an underpass or overpass, financial estimates for any feasible works and any recommendations that could enhance safety at the crossings in the interim. The city says it won't do public consultation because of the technical nature of the study, but it may seek input from the National Capital Commission given it owns land near the study area. The results of the studies and any recommendations for action will be presented to the transportation committee and city council next year.

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