

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 1995

26/01/1995 Ottawa Citizen Waltham

New commuter-rail plan stops short of Aylmer
CP Rail will present a scaled-down version of its commuter rail plan to Outaouais politicians today in an attempt to keep the proposal on track. The new version will be a straight commuter line from Gatineau to Ottawa. It would not include a line to Aylmer as originally proposed. The number of trains would be cut in half and the proposed stations would be cut to 10 from 17. CP Rail hopes the proposal would cut the cost of setting up the system by half. The Outaouais regional government criticized the original \$89- million plan as too expensive and refused to support it. But Wednesday, Hull Mayor Yves Ducharme said he supports the new proposal. "It seems more realistic than what was originally proposed and as far as I am concerned it is OK. But I don't know what Aylmer will say."

02/03/1995 Ottawa Citizen Prescott

OTTAWA-CARLETON CONTINUES TO ENDORSE COMMUTER RAIL:

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

08/03/1995 West Quebec Post Lachute

LOG TRAINS ROLL ON THE LACHUTE SUBDIVISION. After a lengthy absence, log trains have returned to CP Rail System's Lachute Subdivision. The western end of the line, which follows the north shore of the Ottawa River, serves a number of pulp and paper mills and, in its glory days, also carried many shipments of logs. This traffic disappeared for a number of years but is now back, thanks to poor local demand for softwood logs and a surging demand south of the border. Tonnes of hemlock logs are being shipped by rail from Buckingham to Glens Falls, New York. The 400 km journey is cheaper by rail than using logging trucks. There are also plans to ship logs to Trois-Rivieres, Quebec, as well as Quebec City. (Branchline)

31/03/1995 Le Droit Prescott

COMMUTER RAIL NIXED IN NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION:

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

05/04/1995 Canadian Press Lachute

Company endorses railbus study.

Canadian Pacific will participate in a study of the use of busses on rail corridors in the National Capital Region. This study, launched by the Outaouais Regional Government, will examine the use of commuter busses on rail rights-of-way. The regional Government launched the study after rejecting a CP Rail proposal to set up an inter-provincial commuter rail system linking Gatineau and Hull, Quebec with Ottawa.

21/04/1995 Ottawa Citizen Kingston (CN) Brockville

Brockville mourns two teenagers struck by train

BROCKVILLE - Some teenagers wept silently to mourn their two friends, while others showed their sorrow with wails of grief.

The impromptu afternoon vigil was for Dawn Cowan and Candace Mathieson, two 16-year-olds who were struck and killed by a train while walking to their Brockville high school Thursday at 11:30 a.m.

Friends said Cowan and Mathieson had been out comparing prices at stores for a family studies assignment. Word spread quickly throughout Brockville Collegiate Institute, two blocks from the accident site. School administrators immediately gathered the girls' closest friends in the library, where the teenagers cried, hugged each other and, according to one student. "sat loke zombies in total shock."

The teenagers were struck by the first of three locomotives pulling 99 freight cars west from Montreal to Detroit, said CN Rail spokesman Mike Matthews. The gates were down and the bells were sounding at the Park Street level crossing when the accident occurred. The lead locomotive's running lights were illuminated and the engineer sounded the whistle, Matthews said.

It appears the young women entered the crossing while an east-bound freight train was passing and waited on the westbound tracks. Because of the noise of the first train, they failed to see or hear the approach of the westbound train.

Matthews said the train that hit the girls was authorized to travel up to 100 kmh at the crossing. Investigators must determine its actual speed, he said.

"It's a terrible tragedy all around," Matthews said from Toronto.

The main line did not reopen until 1:15 p.m., almost two hours after the crash, delaying as many as four VIA passenger and three freight trains.

"As you can see, we have trespassing problems here," said Neil Thomas, manager of CN train services from Belleville to Toronto. Brockville isn't in his territory, but he was in town on other business when the girls were killed.

During an interview at the scene Thomas pointed to several people - adults and children - who were trespassing by walking alongside the tracks.

"You have to educate these people," he said. "You don't go out and play in the middle of the highway or on the airport runway. And you don't walk on tracks."

As he spoke, the lights started flashing and he paused to watch a car speed across the track before the gate came down. The car should have stopped, said Thomas, shaking his head. "I've been to many (train accidents). It's a tragic thing that shouldn't happen."

25/05/1995 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road

Man killed by train, thought to be suicide

Traffic was disrupted Wednesday when a train hit a 24-year-old man at a level crossing on Fallowfield Road between Greenbank Road and Woodroffe Avenue in Nepean. The body of the Nepean man was found behind the Barrhaven Crossing shopping centre. Police believe the death was a suicide.

BROCKVILLE AND WESTPORT, RESIDENTS COOL TO IDEA OF HIKING TRAIL: Residents of Leeds County, who live along CN's former Westport Subdivision, are cool to the idea of turning it into a hiking trail. Opposition is especially strong in the Westport area with farmers getting three of the on-line townships to pass resolutions opposing such use. It has been more than 40 years since the last train rolled over the Westport Subdivision which was dismantled in 1953. One would think that the passage of time would have ensured that right-of-way had completely reverted to the possession of on-line residents. This does not appear to be the case, however, with local newspapers reporting that Canadian National still owns that portion of the line between Forfar (junction with the now abandoned Smiths Falls Subdivision [Smiths Falls to Napanee] and Westport, a distance of approximately 8 miles. Between Forfar and Brockville, title for the land rests with on-line property owners. Bringing matters to a head was a recent Ontario Government announcement that it would identify and protect abandoned rights-of-way that have potential public benefit and turn them into either utility corridors or recreational trails. Way back in 1967, before hiking trails were fashionable, a similar idea was floated about the B&W. Local opposition also killed it at the time. (Branchline).

STILLBORN - RAILWAYS FAIL TO CONSUMMATE OTTAWA VALLEY RAIL DEAL Although the economics said that it made sense to consolidate CN and CP Rail operations in the Ottawa Valley, the idea proved too radical for regulatory authorities. The deal was cancelled on June 12 thanks to court appeals and environmental requirements. The deal would have 'seen the closure of most of CP Rail's Chalk River Subdivision between Smiths Falls and Chalk River and part of its North Bay Subdivision between Chalk River and Mattawa. All through traffic would have taken Canadian National's Beachburg Subdivision between Ottawa and North Bay. Resistance to the deal was especially stiff from environmentalists who feared the impact of additional trains through Algonquin Park. There is no decision yet as to whether both companies will continue the status quo or whether either one or both will try to reroute their traffic via Toronto. (Branchline).

Train whistle failed to prevent death

A 36-year-old Ottawa man died after a passenger train struck him from behind as he walked along the tracks just west of Brockville. William Joseph Lemoine either ignored or did not hear the train's warning whistle. "For some unknown reason he didn't react to the train, and we have no way of knowing why," said Const. Maureen Maveety of the Ontario Provincial Police, Gananoque detachment. In April, two Brockville high school students were struck and killed by a freight train on the same track after they apparently entered a crossing even though the gates were lowered and the warning bells ringing. Police say Lemoine was trespassing on railway property when he was killed Tuesday.

BRASS POUNDER RELIVES DAYS IN WAKEFIELD: The rhythmic chatter of the telegraph key sounded once again in Wakefield, Quebec, as ex-CBC newsman Richard Inwood, who began his working career in the CPR station in Wakefield, Quebec, recently gave a demonstration of the mysteries of morse via a special hook-up at the Wakefield General store. Inwood was connected with the Hull Station of the Hull, Chelsea and Wakefield Railroad, with passengers in Hull filling out messages that they wanted sent. Inwood was able to oblige with the messages although the medium for sending them was a modem on a telephone line as telegraph wires have long since disappeared. Inwood is the secretary of the First Canadian Chapter of the Morse Telegraph Club Inc., which has 130 members throughout Canada. (Branchline)

COMMUTER RAIL PROPOSAL TABLED FOR OTTAWA: Canadian National has suggested that it could establish a commuter rail service linking the west end of Ottawa with the downtown core. The plan proposes a rush-hour service along the Smiths Falls and Beachburg Subdivisions which would take riders to Ottawa Station where they could then transfer directly to the municipal transit service. Local politicians have a mixed reaction to the proposal, citing worries that it would siphon traffic off the already struggling bus service and that the line is poorly situated in terms of getting passengers to their places of work in a timely fashion. Previously CP Rail System proposed an inter-provincial commuter rail operation for the Ottawa/Hull region. The idea was opposed by Quebec politicians. (Branchline)

Woman survives crash with freight train

A Nepean woman is in critical, but stable condition after crashing into a train at a level crossing Tuesday on Highway 16 near Kemptville. Marguerite Clifford, 58, reached the crossing at the same time as the CP Rail freight train, ramming into the engine, said OPP Const. Gary Howard. Witnesses reported that the crossing bells and lights were working, he said. None of the train crew members was injured.

Lucky driver survives crash with freight train

Bruce Griffin was the first rescue worker at the scene of a car-train crash Saturday He wasn't optimistic.

Stephanie Villeneuve was lying in a trackside ditch, pinned under the hood of her overturned black Trans Am.

Griffin, assistant captain with the Osgoode Township Fire Department, knelt and strained to reach the 31-year-old waitress, trying to feel for a pulse. But he couldn't touch Villeneuve; he could barely see her.

Villeneuve, who would later be called "lucky" by a local firefighter, was blanketed by the twisted steel of her 1,100-kilogram sports car.

"When we first got there, I would have said she wouldn't be pulled put alive," Griffin said Saturday morning, standing at the scene on Boundary Road between Osgoode and South Gower, about 40 kilometres south of Ottawa.

The Kemptville woman received injuries to her head and ribs. She was airlifted to Ottawa General Hospital, where she was listed in stable condition Saturday night.

Villeneuve, who was en route to her job as head waitress at a Byward Market restaurant, slammed into a CP Rail freight train heading to Ottawa at 9:48 a.m.

The collision is the second serious one in less than two years at the rail crossing and raised questions among some residents about the safety of the intersection, just off Regional Road 19.

But others said the intersection was well-enough marked, and drivers should be blamed for any accidents.

There are no flashing lights, bells, or barrier arms where the tracks cross the gravel road. But after the last accident, the township erected three signs on the road leading to the tracks.

"Restricted Visibility," says one sign. "Be Prepared to Stop," reads the next, then "Stop Before Crossing."

Close call: A member of the emergency team inspects a freight train that derailed on its way to a DuPont plant in Kingston. Cars, carrying chemicals, derailed on a trestle over a creek. There were no leaks or injuries

17/10/1995 *La Presse*

Lachute

PROVINCE PROTECTS LACHUTE SUBDIVISION FROM ABANDONMENT: The Province of Quebec has moved to prevent Canadian Pacific from dismantling that portion of its Lachute Subdivision between a point near Ste-Therese (mileage 28.0) and a point near Thurso (mileage 90.1). The company had received the necessary authority from the NTA to abandon the segment.

The Province of Quebec was able to invoke its Law on Special Development and Urban Planning to save the line, following requests made from politicians of affected communities along the line. The law protects the line from abandonment for up to two years, after which decisions will be required as to whether or not the abandonment will be allowed.

The Lachute Subdivision connects Montreal and Ottawa and is the only CP line to do so on a direct basis. Presently, the line is operated as two segments. Service from Montreal to Ste-Therese is provided by trains operating out of St-Luc Yard while service from Thurso west is provided by trains operating out of Ottawa. Most traffic between Thurso and Ottawa is forwarded to CP's main line via Bedell and a connection with the Winchester Subdivision. (Branchline)

18/10/1995 *West Quebec Post*

Maniwaki

Wakefield

WAKEFIELD TRAIN HOSTS TOURIST CONVENTION: Approximately 500 representatives from tourist companies around the world took the Wakefield Steam Train on the evening of October 24 for a two-hour nostalgic journey up the Gatineau Valley. While on the train, the riders were treated to cocktails and a full-course, utensil-less meal. Now in winter storage, the Wakefield train, featuring Swedish equipment, carried approximately 30,000 riders this year as well as building a solid reputation for reliability. (Branchline)

31/10/1995 *Financial Post*

Beachburg

TRAINS TO VACATE ALGONQUIN PARK: New labour pacts will allow CN to start re-routing transcontinental freight trains (mainly intermodal trains) out of the Ottawa Valley as early as the third week of November. These freights will now travel between Montreal and the west via Toronto. About 69 jobs will be cut. CN is closing the Ottawa Valley route because it needs to cut excess rail capacity in Eastern Canada. After the re-routings, about 200 kilometres of track between Pembroke and Nipissing (near North Bay), may be abandoned because no traffic originates or terminates on the line. The track runs through the northern half of Algonquin Provincial Park. Existing weekday local service between Ottawa and Pembroke be maintained. (Branchline)

17/11/1995 *Canadian Press*

Chalk River

OTTAWA VALLEY ROUTE RE-EXAMINED: CPRS has asked the National Transportation Agency to rescind abandonment orders on the railway's Chalk River and North Bay subdivisions in Ontario that were to take effect November 19.

The route's future remains far from certain. "We don't anticipate any difficulty getting the order rescinded," said CP spokesman Paul Thurston. "The NTA will probably welcome some direction." The reversal does not mean the lines are cost-effective - there are still too many tracks in eastern Ontario for the number of trains, he said.

The line, between Smiths Falls and Mattawa, was to be shut down when CP agreed in principle with CN earlier this year to utilize the CN route through the Ottawa Valley, but that agreement collapsed under objections from environmental groups opposed to increasing rail traffic on the CN line through Algonquin Provincial Park. CPRS was left with an abandonment order and no agreement with CN - hence the new application to have the order revoked.

CPRS said the lines are being assessed. Daily freight service along the route will continue pending the outcome of the review, in which CPRS is actively exploring ways to reduce the cost of the operations. Almost all freight travelling the line is non-local in origin and destination. (Branchline)

18/12/1995 *Ottawa Citizen*

Alexandria

Casselman

Casselman man injured after car-train collision

A Casselman-area man was in hospital with serious injuries late Sunday after the car he was driving collided with a VIA passenger train in Casselman, 50 kilometres east of Ottawa, earlier in the day. Provincial police said the accident occurred when the man's car was hit by a westbound train at a level crossing on Segault Road at 12:23 p.m. The man, in his 40s, was taken to the Ottawa General Hospital.