

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 2009

Tuesday 12/01/2009 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria Ottawa New

Gyllenhaal sci-fi thriller to film at train station

'Modern futuristic' feel draws producers

Actor Jake Gyllenhaal is coming to town in late March to film scenes for a big-budget science-fiction thriller at the Ottawa train station.

Gyllenhaal, from *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Day After Tomorrow* and the cult thriller *Donnie Darko*, is the star of *Source Code*, a thriller about a soldier who inexplicably awakens in the body of a commuter and is forced to solve a mystery about a harrowing train bombing.

Duncan Jones, son of music icon David Bowie, is the director of the movie, which is budgeted at about \$35 million, according to press reports. Oscar-winner Ben Kingsley is believed to be in the cast, although the producers would not confirm it.

The Ottawa train station will figure prominently in the movie and was largely chosen because the architecture of the building has a "modern, futuristic" look to it. A production crew totalling more than 150 people may come to the city for at least four days of shooting in late March.

The film's producers were impressed by the architecture of the station and how it fits the storyline of their movie.

Built in 1966 and designed by John B. Parkin & Associates, it won a Massey Medal for architecture in 1967 and was named by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada as one of the country's Top 500 buildings of the last millennium.

It's believed this is the first time a movie of this scale has been filmed at the Tremblay Road station.

VIA Rail spokesman Malcolm Andrews said the station will not close during filming.

"We just let them know what kind of hours they will be able to use it so it's not inconveniencing our customers or interfering with our normal train operations," he said.

The film will be shot mostly in Montreal, starting in early March. It is among a number of outside productions expected to revitalize the struggling film industry in Montreal. As well, it may help revive production in Ottawa, which also suffered in 2009.

Roch Brunette, head of the Ottawa-Gatineau Film and Television Development Corporation, said outside productions always help Ottawa's film industry and bring needed revenue to the city.

Thursday 22/01/2009 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Gatineau gives steam train a \$1.2M boost

The city of Gatineau is kicking in more than \$1.2 million to help get the region's steam train back on track.

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train hasn't been running since a May 2008 landslide near Chelsea stopped 10 metres short of the track.

The money will pay for the work required at the landslide site, as well as at the Leamy Creek crossing and the Chelsea bridge. The work will start in March and continue in 2010 and 2011.

Community groups including business and tourism partners raised over \$1.9 million. The province and the federal government also contributed \$1.9 million each.

The city also announced it will lease the railway corridor to the Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais. The city will have a seat on the board of administration that will be established to administer the railway.

Saturday 07/02/2009 Ottawa Citizen Winchester Dalhousie Mills

No injuries, safety issues after train derails in Quebec

Canadian Pacific Rail crews will be working throughout the weekend to repair damage caused by a 20-car derailment early yesterday near Dalhousie Mills, Que., a farm community east of Alexandria.

"Twenty cars of the freight train derailed about 3:50 a.m.," said Canadian Pacific spokesman Michel Sp  nard. "Sixteen of the cars were empty; four were auto-carriers loaded with used cars," he said.

"All the cars are upright. There are no injuries, and no environmental issues. And there are no public safety issues and no blocked crossings, that sort of thing.

"It's only our own freight traffic that is involved. We have double tracks there. Six of the cars were leaning over toward the other track, so they were our priority, getting them out of the way to resume operations between the clean up."

The cause of the derailment is under investigation, said Canadian Pacific spokesman Mark Seland.

Mr. Seland said a repair was made Feb. 4 to the section of the track where the derailment occurred.

20/02/2009 Pembroke Observer Beachburg

AREA RAIL SERVICE STILL POSSIBLE: The latest revision to CN's three-year rail network plan has placed the rail line (Beachburg Subdivision) that would be used for a proposed interprovincial commuter rail service in the Ottawa Valley on the list of lines to be discontinued. While this might seem like a big problem, the members of the committee looking to establish the commuter service said hope is certainly not lost. In fact, committee member Izett McBride, chairman of the growth and development committee for Whitewater region, said in some respects, the threat of the line being discontinued could speed things up.

The idea of the commuter service is being headed by SADC Pontiac Community Futures in Quebec and has gained favour with Renfrew County Community Futures Development Corporation as well as local politicians. McBride described the current situation as a bit of a "cat and mouse game" but for the moment, the committee looking at establishing the service is continuing to move the project forward. It will worry about the fate of the rail line if and when it needs to. It is McBride's understanding that the line is slated to be abandoned in about 18 months. John Brayley, manager of network strategies for CN, said the company is required to put its intention to discontinue the line on its public plan before it can move on to the next step in abandoning the line. The intention to discontinue the line remains on the public plan for 12 months before CN is entitled to begin the process to actually abandon it. During this time, there would be an opportunity for another company, organization or railway to purchase the line. McBride believes the fate of the rail line has three possible outcomes. First, there is the possibility that the line will once again get busy and CN will change its mind. Second, another group, municipality, or railway could offer to purchase the line. The third outcome would see nothing change and CN decide to abandon the line and put it up for sale.

Those pursuing the idea of commuter rail down the valley to Ottawa are currently preparing a survey to see if residents of eastern Ontario and western Quebec are interested in the service and if numbers are sufficient to support it. Brittany Morin, economic development officer for SADC Pontiac Community Futures Development Corporation, said the survey is nearly finished and should be released to the public in about a week. Morin added that she hopes to have the results by early spring. (Branchline).

Thursday 05/03/2009 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

Ottawa Valley communities to study viability of commuter rail line

The idea of a regional rail line from Ottawa to communities in the Ottawa Valley and Pontiac is moving ahead to a study phase. The Community Futures Development Corporations of Renfrew and Pontiac counties have partnered to explore the viability of a rural commuter rail line and are conducting a public survey to gauge community interest. The survey is available online at www.rcfcdc.org and www.commercepontiac.ca. Results will be made public in April.

Last fall, the commuter rail line had a trial run as the mayors of Bristol, Que., Arnprior and Renfrew joined other area politicians and Ottawa Central Railway staff on a test run of the train from the Walkley railyard in Ottawa to Pembroke along existing OCR tracks. The idea of a regional rail line for commuters was first raised in June 2007 by Mayor Larry O'Brien's task force on transportation. Since then, the regional mayors have been looking into the viability of a commuter rail line on their own.

March-09-14

Colin J. Churcher

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NEW TRY TO SAVE STATION: There is a fresh push underway to rehabilitate the old train station on Montreal Street in Kingston, Ontario. Five years after the city rejected an offer from CN to acquire the historic outer station and the five hectares of land on which it sits for a dollar, the Frontenac Heritage Foundation is taking a new run at the idea. It is suggesting that the city start negotiating with CN, which owns the land and the building but is eager to unload it, either to take the land as a gift or have CN lease it for 99 years. Ron Smith of the foundation says then, if the city will commit to spending \$200,000 a year for four years - primarily to put a new roof on the building and to restore the inside - his group will lobby Ottawa for grants to turn the newer part of the station into a Sir John A. Macdonald museum in time for the 200th anniversary of his birth in 2015. The city rejected the land in 2004 after a staff report estimated it would cost \$1.6M to rehabilitate the buildings, and at least \$2M to clean up the polluted site. Smith takes issue with many of the assumptions in the report and says it could be done far cheaper, and a long-term lease would allow the contamination issues to be sidestepped. He would like the older building open by 2013 so it could be used to mark the 1938 visit of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Mackenzie King to the city. The Macdonald museum would open two years later. "The most important thing right now is to get a new roof on the building," he said. (Branchline)

Sunday 08/03/2009 *Ottawa Citizen* *Maniwaki*

More than \$4M in funding puts steam train back on track

Outaouais tourist draw expected to resume May 9

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train will ride again, thanks to more than \$4 million in funding from the city, the province and the federal government.

The Outaouais tourist attraction ground to a halt almost a year ago after a landslide by the tracks near Chelsea. Supporters have been trying since then to arrange funding to cover the repairs. Service is expected to resume May 9.

"It's quite a turn-around," said André Groulx, whose family owns the steam train. "It's been a very long year sort of in standby, not knowing what's going to happen to us ultimately."

The exact amount of funding is not being disclosed until the official announcement, expected on Monday, but the numbers are expected to reflect previously announced commitments.

In January, the city of Gatineau announced it would commit \$1.2 million of the estimated \$4.3 million urgently required to repair the tracks and also to do work at Leamy Creek crossing and Chelsea bridge. The province and the federal government each committed \$1.9 million.

Local businesses kicked in additional money.

Some repair estimates, however, have run as high as \$9.6 million, including additional non-urgent improvements to the tracks.

Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon, who represents the federal Pontiac riding, and provincial Transport Minister Norman MacMillan, who represents Papineau, are to make the announcement at the Hull train station.

A spokeswoman for Cannon says the minister believes in the potential of tourism for the region, which has been hit hard by job cuts in the forestry industry.

"The train ensures not only direct jobs, but as well economic activity in the region where it is much, much needed," said Catherine Loubier.

Groulx says the train provides 80 direct jobs, plus at least 20 indirect jobs. The track repairs, expected to take three years, will also generate construction jobs.

Groulx admits the recession that makes those jobs so important could also affect the train's customer base.

"There's certainly going to be some challenges, but at the same time there may be some opportunities," said Groulx.

"People may just decide to vacation or travel differently and that may create some local traffic on the train whereas in other years maybe people would go outside the region. People may be looking more ... in their own backyards."

Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras said he's excited about the announcement.

"It's been a very, very long and arduous process, and it's coming to fruition, and Monday should be a day of celebration for everybody."

The steam train attracts 50,000 riders a year and has brought about \$60 million into the region over the 14 years owner Jean Gauthier has run it. Last spring, Gauthier put the train up for sale, and had seven offers from as far away as western Canada and the United States. But Groulx, Gauthier's son-in-law, said the family decided last November not to sell when the provincial and federal governments committed to fixing the tracks.

09/03/2009 *Canada Newswire* *Maniwaki*

GOVERNMENT AWARDS \$1.9M TO REPAIR QUEBEC RAILWAY LINE: The federal government of Canada has awarded nonrepayable funding of \$1,940,000 to the Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais. This funding will go toward the work required to repair the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield railway line. This project, which will necessitate a total investment of \$5.8 million, will be carried out in partnership with the Government of Quebec, the municipalities concerned, the Conference régionale des lus and Outaouais Tourism. In May 2008, a landslide brought the steam train to a complete stop. Its famous steam locomotive 909, built in Sweden over 100 years ago, is seen as a distinctive symbol and trademark of the Outaouais region. "We had to support this tourist attraction. The steam train alone is featured in 40% of all the tourism packages sold by Outaouais Tourism. It attracts more than 55,000 people annually and generates \$10 million in spinoffs. To that you have to add 80 direct jobs, not to mention indirect jobs, for example, in Wakefield businesses," said Minister Lebel. This contribution to the Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais has been awarded under the Community Diversification program's Major Economic and Tourism Facilities initiative which helps devitalized regions and communities develop facilities and promote short- and medium-term economic growth. (Canada Newswire, Mar. 9). [Regular service between Gatineau (Hull) and Wakefield will resume on May 9, 2009. For tickets and information go to <http://steamtrain.ca>] (Branchline)

Monday 16/03/2009 *CTV News* *Alexandria*

Feds spend millions to upgrade rail line to Montreal

Updated: Mon Mar. 16 2009 17:47: ctvottawa.ca

The federal government is poised to announce a significant upgrade to the rail line between Ottawa and Montreal on Tuesday.

CTV Ottawa has learned at least \$10 million will be spent to help improve Via Rail travel time between cities.

The funds to upgrade the Ottawa-Montreal route were put aside in the 2008 budget.

Other upgrades that were promised this year are expected to speed up Via Rail train travel between Windsor and Quebec City.

Tuesday 17/03/2009 CBC News Alexandria

Better, faster train service coming to Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal

Transport Minister John Baird said Tuesday that infrastructure improvements could cut Via Rail's Montreal-Toronto travel time back to four hours. (CBC)

The federal government has plans to boost passenger rail service to Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, Transport Minister John Baird announced Tuesday.

Baird made the announcement that track improvements are coming down the line after riding into Ottawa's Via Rail station by train.

The government plans to add two more trains in both directions between Ottawa and Montreal, he said.

He also announced plans to get trains that are already running between Montreal and Toronto to move faster.

"Improved infrastructure means safer rail travel," Baird said. By eliminating delays and congestion, trains would be able to reach their destinations faster, he said.

That's a commitment, Baird said, that could cut the travel time between Toronto and Montreal to four hours, making the trip as fast as it was in 1973, when the Canadian Turbo Train was still in operation.

And the idea of bringing a high-speed train to the corridor between Windsor and Quebec City is still on the table. The idea's been studied many times over the past 30 years, and another study is underway.

"I think before we make a \$30-billion decision "I think a \$20- or \$30-billion decision" what we should do is get the facts in front of us," Baird said. "That's what Canadians expect."

Canadians should also consider what they'll lose if the government doesn't invest in faster train service, said Paul Langan of the group High-Speed Rail Canada.

"Moving forward with these baby steps," he said, "we're never going to have a modern passenger service."

18/03/2009 Ottawa Sun Alexandria

Government of Canada and Via Rail complete upgrades

Major improvements to passenger rail service in the Ottawa area will make VIA Rail Canada faster and more reliable for passengers. Canada's Transport Minister John Baird, Donald Wright, Chairman of the Board at VIA Rail Canada, and President and CEO Paul Côté, announced over \$13 million of improvements are now complete. This investment supplements the \$516M announced for VIA Rail in 2007 for capital requirements. This second phase of the revitalization plan will help VIA Rail consolidate previous investments and continue renewing its assets while securing VIA's plans for continued growth. "I applaud the Government of Canada for its recognition of the potential of passenger rail through additional investments in VIA's network," said Wright. "It is in this spirit that we have planned for the wisest possible use of these funds." Upgrades so far on VIA's network include a \$12.5M investment in the Alexandria Subdivision, between Ottawa and Montreal as well as similar improvements currently underway on the Smiths Falls Subdivision between Toronto and Ottawa. In addition, major renovations worth some \$500,000 were made to the Ottawa station, which will allow VIA to serve customers more efficiently and will address operational and safety needs.

(Canada NewsWire 090317, Ottawa Sun 090318)

Saturday 18/04/2009 North Bay Nugget Chalk River

OVR workers caught in the middle.

CP, RailAmerica in dispute, union head says

Ottawa Valley Railway employees are caught in the middle of a dispute between two multi-national corporations, said the general chairman for Teamsters Rail Conference Line East which represents more than 50 Ottawa Valley Railway workers in the North Bay area.

Rene Leclerc said the dispute between Canadian Pacific Railway and RailAmerica is about who will pay for rail maintenance and much-needed upgrades to the tracks from Smiths Falls to North Bay.

Canadian Pacific owns the rail line, however RailAmerica, which operates Ottawa Valley Railway, uses the tracks to transport forest products and cargo.

Leclerc said he has heard rumours CP is considering shutting down the Smiths Falls to North Bay line because it doesn't want to invest in track maintenance.

"Canadian Pacific isn't interested in investing, they'll just claw back traffic on their line," Leclerc said Friday morning from his office in Quebec.

"I think this is a drastic attack from CP on a short little railway. They don't care about the people or North Bay or anyone," he said.

"In order to restore the track, each railway has to invest. Our members are worried and concerned, but at this moment there's nothing we can do. It's a fight between the two carriers."

Several calls to the media relations personnel at Canadian Pacific were not returned.

Ottawa Valley Railroad and RailAmerica also didn't answer requests for an interview. RailAmerica is a subsidiary of Fortress.

Leclerc said this isn't the first time track repairs have had to be made.

He said in the past, speed reductions were in place because of the condition of the tracks.

Some improvements have been made, however Leclerc said the tracks have to be constantly maintained and repaired.

"Nobody wants to see this line shut down, but I guess it's possible," Leclerc said.

Monday 27/04/2009 North Bay Nugget Chalk River

Reacting to a major decrease in business, the Ottawa Valley Railway (OVR), a RailAmerica property, has issued lay-off notices to approximately 30 affected employees.

The decline in business results from a decision by Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) to reroute its freight trains from the OVR route to its own system between Sudbury and Montreal. OVR had operated the trains from one end of OVR's line to the other. The rerouted trains had accounted for about 85 percent of OVR's overall traffic. The reroute could last for the balance of 2009. Positions affected will be concentrated in OVR's transportation department and include train dispatchers, locomotive engineers and conductors. OVR is acting in accordance with the provisions of the Canadian Labour Code and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

"This is an incredibly unfortunate outcome of the declining economy," said OVR General Manager Scott Campbell. "We are very disappointed that we must reduce our workforce. However, we hope when the economy rebounds that we can return to normal employment levels." OVR is a short-line railroad that operates 340 miles of track between Coniston and Smith Falls, Ontario, with CP interchanges at Sudbury and Smith Falls. Shipments for paper company Tembec and other local businesses represent the remaining 15 percent of OVR's business. "The current economic climate is having dramatic effects on the forest products industry, which is heavily concentrated in Northern Ontario," said Campbell. "While we never want to lose any employees, we understand the challenges our industry is currently facing."

OVR was moving approximately 60,000 carloads per year, including intermodal, forest products and chemicals. In prior years, the railroad has moved as many as 115,000 carloads per year.

About RailAmerica, Inc.

RailAmerica is a leading owner and operator of North American regional and short-line railroads. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., the company operates railroads in 26 states and three Canadian provinces, with more than 8,000 miles of track. RailAmerica is owned by funds managed by affiliates of Fortress Investment Group, a leading global alternative asset manager with approximately \$34.3 billion in assets under management. For more information, visit www.railamerica.com and www.fortress.com

Tuesday 12/05/2009 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Soggy crossing derails Wakefield train

Steam engine will be back on track Wednesday after 'minor' incident, spokesman says

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train derailed on Sunday in Chelsea on its second run of the season after repairs funded by the municipal, provincial and federal governments were completed and the line had passed inspection.

André Groulx, whose family owns the train, said the empty second-last car derailed at about 2:30 p.m. during a Mother's Day excursion because of soggy ground at a private rail crossing in the Larrimac area.

The line passed a safety inspection last Wednesday.

No one was injured, but about 30 passengers in the last car had to board other cars to continue their journey back to the station in Gatineau's Hull sector. The last two cars remained behind until Monday, when a crane from Montreal put the derailed car back on the track.

Wednesday's excursion is expected to go ahead as scheduled.

"The small private crossing was saturated with water, but you couldn't see it because of the gravel," Groulx said. "With the pressure on the ties it spread the rails enough that one of the wheels got off and the car derailed."

"We were travelling at three to five miles an hour at the crossing and just as we accelerated out of the crossing the second-last car decoupled. It applied the emergency brakes and the whole train stopped within a few feet."

Groulx said the accident was minor because the train was travelling slowly and came to a stop. The section of track that came apart is expected to be rebuilt before the next excursion.

In January, the City of Gatineau announced it would commit \$1.2 million of the estimated \$4.3 million urgently required to repair the tracks and also to do work at Leamy Creek crossing and Chelsea Bridge.

The province and the federal government each committed \$1.9 million.

A landslide that stopped the train a year ago was removed in March. Another landslide near the same area on April 1 was also repaired.

Groulx said all urgent repairs to the line have been completed, but improvements to the line will take about three years.

Kim Brisson, who lives in Chelsea north of the crossing where the train derailed, said her husband met a man who walked home after the accident.

"This is the third accident in a year with this train and this is going to become a problem for them," she said.

The steam train attracts 50,000 riders a year and has brought about \$60 million into the region over the 14 years owner Jean Gauthier has run it. Last spring, Gauthier put the train up for sale, and had seven offers from as far away as western Canada and the United States. But Groulx, Gauthier's son-in-law, said the family decided last November not to sell when the provincial and federal governments agreed to help repair the tracks.

Saturday 23/05/2009 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg Ottawa

Via Rail apologizes for impending racket near Billings Bridge, Mooney's Bay

Via Rail is planning eleven nights of noisy work on its tracks in the southern part of downtown Ottawa, and warns that people living near by could be disturbed by it for up to three nights each.

The work is to upgrade about 10 kilometres of track, Via said in a news release. "In order not to interfere with daytime passenger train movements, the work must be performed overnight between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.," the rail company said.

The plan is for the workers to move along the track as the improvements are completed, so the machinery and crews should only be audible in any given location for about three nights, the company says.

For more information, nearby residents can call 1-888-VIA-RAIL.

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)

Kingston, ON, will spend \$70,000 to refurbish a major tourist attraction in Confederation Basin, despite a bid by one city councillor to postpone the work. Councillor Mark Gerretsen wanted to cut the spending to restore the Spirit of Sir John A. locomotive until a work plan is available. The money or the project, contained in the city's capital budget, will be spent on shoring up some parts of the locomotive to make it safe and create detailed drawings for a permanent shelter around the old locomotive. City commissioner Cynthia Beach said the locomotive will eventually become unsafe in its current position and work needs to be done to ensure that eventuality doesn't come to fruition. The jet-black locomotive, No. 1095, has been a fixture in Confederation Basin for more than four decades. The locomotive came to life in 1913, built in Kingston at the site of the former Canadian Locomotive Company. The engine criss-crossed the country for CP, spending most of its time in Winnipeg before coming to the end of its line in Montreal. The Canadian Junior Chamber of Commerce, better known as simply the Jaycees, paid \$10,000 for the locomotive as a gift to the city in 1966. But over its four decades in the park across from City Hall, little if any work has been done to keep it in decent condition. A group of volunteers came forward to restore the locomotive, aiming for the work to be completed by 2013, in time for the 100th birthday of No. 1095. The overall cost of the project is estimated to be nearly \$500,000, the majority of which will be covered through donations.

Wednesday 10/06/2009 Press release Alexandria

Subject: The Train to the Games
The Transport Board (TEO) and the Highland Games announce the Train to the Maxville Games
Dateline Casselman and Maxville : June 10th 2009

The North Glengarry Prescott & Russell Transport Board (TEO) and the Glengarry Highland Games announce details of the train excursion to and from the Glengarry Highland Games at Maxville on Saturday August 1st 2009. The cooperation among the Board, VIA Rail Canada, the Highland Games and the Scottish and Irish Store in Ottawa – is noteworthy. The excursion from Ottawa is offered with a goal of traffic reduction and for greener travel to the Games. On Saturday August 1st, a VIA Rail Canada train will be used to carry 68 persons from Ottawa to the Highland Games in Maxville. The morning departure towards Maxville will leave Ottawa at 9:55 am, and the return trip will leave Maxville about 6:50 pm toward Ottawa, allowing the participants to take in most of the events. The number of seats being limited, prospective passengers should buy their combined tickets (train with Games) early. The VIA deadline is the end of June so time is of the essence. The train fare will be \$30 return from Ottawa for all ages (children under two free) and admission to the Games will cost \$20 (children under 12 free). The organisers wish to thank VIA Rail Canada for making this exceptionally low fare available! Tickets may be purchased at The Scottish and Irish Stores: 194 Robertson Rd. (Bell's Corners) tel. 613.829.2251 1713 St-Laurent Boulevard (nr. Innes Rd) tel. 613.739.3393

19/06/2009 Kingston Daily British Whig Kingston (CP)

PLAN TO REFURBISH TOURIST ATTRACTION GAINS STEAM: Kingston, will spend \$70,000 to refurbish a major tourist attraction in Confederation Basin - the Spirit of Sir John A. locomotive. The money will be spent on shoring up some parts of the locomotive to make it safe and create detailed drawings for a permanent shelter around the old locomotive. City commissioner Cynthia Beach said the locomotive will eventually become unsafe in its current position and work needs to be done to ensure that eventuality doesn't come to fruition. The jet-black locomotive, No. 1095, has been a fixture in Confederation Basin for more than four decades. The locomotive came to life in 1913, built in Kingston at the site of the former Canadian Locomotive Company. The Canadian Junior Chamber of Commerce paid \$10,000 for the locomotive as a gift to the city in 1966. But over its four decades in the park across from City Hall, little if any work has been done to keep it in decent condition. A group of volunteers came forward to restore the locomotive, aiming for the work to be completed by 2013, in time for the 100th birthday of No. 1095. The overall cost of the project is estimated to be nearly \$500,000, the majority of which will be covered through donations. (Branchline)

27/06/2009 Stittville News Carleton Place Stittville

All aboard: Railway display at library
All aboard, the railroad's back in Stittville.
Or at least the next best thing - photographs of the way it was as well as a collection of railway artifacts and memorabilia. It is all at the Stittville branch of the Ottawa Public Library thanks to two staff members from the Goulbourn Museum, Tracey Donaldson and Brianne Kerik, who prepared the exhibit and display which is now occupying the ArtSpace wall and accompanying display cabinet at the library branch. Everyone interested in the railway history of Stittville as well as Ashton and Richmond is urged to drop in and view the exhibit and display to get a feel for the important role that the railway played in the history of these Goulbourn communities. This exhibit and display on the history of the railway in Goulbourn will be on view at the Stittville library branch until Wednesday, August 5.

Thursday 02/07/2009 Almonte/Carleton Place AMC Carleton Place Carleton Place

New Chamber office in former train station officially opens
Bob Hawkins remembers his ride on the last passenger train to ever stop at the former CP station in Carleton Place, ON. "I took my grandson Ryan and we went to Arnprior. He was just a little lad - only four years old," a smiling Hawkins told the Record News EMC. "It was sad to see it (passenger rail service) go." The date was Jan. 14, 1990 meaning the Hawkins' train trip occurred nearly 20 years ago. Only weeks after the last passenger train passed through the community the tracks, which connected Carleton Place and nearby Ottawa, were torn up. It's a move that remains controversial to this day, especially in light of the current trend toward expanded commuter rail service from suburbs, including Carleton Place, into the centre of the nation's capital. The official opening of the sections of the former station which will now house the town's 'Visitors Centre', along with the Chamber offices, touched off a wave of nostalgia. Many of those who came to the opening were there to see how the structure has changed in the two decades since it was last used as a railway station.

Unused railway bridge needs \$40M in repairs for O-Train use: report

For some, the Prince of Wales rail bridge represents a good transit connection between Ottawa and Gatineau, but it needs lots of repairs that could cost up to \$40 million, says a City of Ottawa report on the structure.

In a memo to city councillors, the city's infrastructure director, Wayne Newell, says preliminary visual inspections have determined that getting the bridge into service would be a pretty big undertaking.

He says more detailed inspections are needed before a more precise estimate on the cost of repairs can be made, and that these alone would take about eight months and cost \$1.5 million.

"Transport Canada advised that before being placed into active service, we will need to inspect the structure in detail to ensure its safety for the operations that are being proposed," Newell says in the memo.

"Without a detailed condition assessment it is difficult to estimate the cost or extent of renewal, however based on the information available the cost could vary between \$20M and \$40M."

For years, transit advocates having been pushing the city to look at extending the O-Train across the bridge, which the city has owned since 2005, as a way of alleviating pressure on road bridges, which handle buses from both cities.

The one-kilometre bridge starts near the current O-Train terminus and crosses the Ottawa River in two spans to the western edge of downtown Hull section of Gatineau.

In March, elected officials on the City of Ottawa's transit committee directed Newell's department to look into the costs of repairing the bridge, which is currently not in use.

His report is expected to be back before the committee this fall when a decision on whether or not to continue looking at using the bridge is to be made.

Thursday 16/07/2009 North Bay Nugget Beachburg

Ottawa Valley towns banding together to keep trains on track

PEMBROKE—Municipal councils and interested people on both sides of the Ottawa River agree they don't want the railway tracks running through the Ottawa Valley scrapped.

Representatives of both Renfrew County and MRC Pontiac councils, the City of Pembroke, along with staff, VIPs, economic development people and other interested parties gathered Tuesday morning to meet with members of the joint rail transport committee, which has been working to get a commuter train in the region.

While acknowledging there remains a lot of work and millions of dollars in investment to make it happen, the committee's top priority now is to convince the Canadian National Railway not to tear up the 130-km stretch of track linking the region to Ottawa.

This section, known as the Beachburg subdivision, has been placed on the list of lines the railway wants to abandon.

Louise Donaldson, executive director of SADC Pontiac Community Futures, who, with its counterpart the Community Futures Development Corporation of Renfrew County, are spearheading the effort, said the news CN was looking to abandon the line within six months caught the group off guard, forcing it to scramble in order to head off the attempt.

In order to do that, she said, the committee needed to show interest it wants to purchase the rails and to get that kind of clout, has applied to Industry Canada to form the Transport Pontiac-Renfrew corporation.

"It is the threat to economic development for our regions and the commuter train which is the prime motivation for this meeting," Ms. Donaldson said, stressing it is important to preserve the tracks and not just for the potential future of a commuter train.

"It is very difficult if not impossible to sell an area to industry without rail," she said.

Ted Barron, the chairman of Renfrew County's Community Futures and the head of the rail committee, said no one wants the line to become abandoned, as once it is gone, it will never come back.

"It took a hundred years to get the rails laid down and I hope we don't lose them now," he said. "That's our life and breath."

The joint rail committee pushed ahead with this because of the tight 90-day time-line to respond to the abandonment announcement. It was hoping for both county councils to officially endorse the efforts to enter talks with CN by passing a resolution before the end of Tuesday's information meeting.

However, neither county was comfortable with this, feeling they needed to bring the matter before their full councils for endorsement.

MRC Pontiac Warden Mike McCrank said he knows this is an urgent matter, but said they need to take this back to their respective councils before they approve it.

"Here, we're a group of concerned citizens" attending an information session, he said, with no authority to make such a decision.

Warden McCrank said MRC Pontiac council is meeting Thursday to discuss other matters, so he can present this motion then.

Admaston/Bromley Township Mayor Raye-Anne Briscoe said there is no way she can support this before bringing it before Renfrew County council, agreeing with deputy clerk Jim Kutschke they didn't have the mandate to do so.

"We only have three out of 17 county council representatives here now," she said. Mayor Briscoe said she is concerned if the majority of council decides to reject this endorsement, the county would be forced to withdraw, perhaps damaging the effort beyond repair.

"I don't want to bring grief to the project," she said. "I'm just asking for the time to do this right."

The next scheduled meeting for county council is the end of August, before which the matter has to go through the development and property committee.

Warden McCrank said he feels that isn't a problem, as he expects MRC Pontiac to back the resolution this week. Renfrew County can join in later.

The idea of a commuter rail service has been gaining steam since last fall following a successful pilot run between Beachburg and Ottawa on Oct. 5, 2008, which led to local municipal leaders on both sides of the Ottawa River signing a joint statement with Ottawa city council.

This began the planning process for the project, as well as urging the federal and provincial governments to help by smoothing out regulatory approvals and seeking funding which might be available.

An online survey was also launched to gauge interest in a regular commuter service.

Harry Gow, the founder of Transport 2000 in Canada and a technical advisor for the project, told those gathered at Tuesday's meeting the interest is definitely there. Out of an estimated 6,000 who commute regularly to Ottawa, more than 600 took the time to answer the survey, with the majority of them in favour of a regular train service.

He said if done in conjunction with a nightly freight service, this can be made viable, with ticket prices kept to levels comparable to a regular bus route, with single one-way tickets ranging from \$10 to \$15 depending on where the rider boards the train.

To get it going won't be cheap. Based on the initial pilot project study, it is estimated start up costs will be \$6.8 million in the first year, including operational expenses and upgrading infrastructure and the rail stations. In the second year the cost could be \$3.3 million and in the third year \$3.5 million to finish things up.

James Allen, president and CEO of JDA Consulting, who is another member of the rail development team, said this investment is considerable, but one has to remember the assets themselves will last 20 to 40 years.

If sufficient freight customers can be secured, these revenues will be of help in keeping the rail service running, he said, and securing government funding will also help make this a reality.

The exact cost it will take to do and what will be required from both counties hasn't been determined.

Mr. Gow said the next step once the body of the new nonprofit corporation is sorted out is to develop a business plan, looking into everything from auditing the tracks, switches, signals and crossings, figuring out how viable it is and marketing the system to determining the best way to attract tourists into riding the train.

All of this will have to be co-ordinated to link up to create a train system serving both Eastern Ontario and West Quebec.

"Lots of work has to be done," he said. "There is a place for regional carriers," but they will have to work hard to get and keep the business.

Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP Cheryl Gallant, invited to attend the meeting, said she feels this is a historic day, when the councils of both Renfrew and the Pontiac sat together to work things out for the betterment of both.

MP Gallant said the Pontiac's federal government representative MP Lawrence Cannon is also a strong supporter of this rail project and together she is sure they can lobby hard on its behalf.

The new Transport Pontiac-Renfrew was to have contacted CN Tuesday afternoon.

Tuesday 18/07/2009 Ottawa Citizen OTrain

Woman struck by O-Train dies

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

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

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

25/07/2009

Brockville Recorder

Kingston (CN)

Brockville

City hit with surprise CN bill

Brockville city hall staff revealed last week CN has billed the city \$14,600 annually to inspect and maintain pedestrian barriers at four level railway crossings. Director of operations Conal Cosgrove indicated the fee - \$305 per month for each of the four crossings - was unexpected. "I don't believe that we had any indication from them that there was going to be an increased cost," said Cosgrove. The city already pays CN an annual fee of about \$40,000 for inspection and maintenance of the railway's property in Brockville. "I guess maybe there was an assumption that there would be additional costs (after the pedestrian barriers were installed)," said Cosgrove. In an interview Thursday, Cosgrove suggested the \$14,600 fee is steep when compared to the \$40,000 paid by the city for similar services at all other CN property through Brockville. CN spokesman Frank Binder said the rate and inspection/maintenance schedule is actually set by Transport Canada. He said the railway and municipality share the cost on upkeep. "We can't set the fees. We're on the hook for half, the city is on the hook for the other half," said Binder. At Wednesday's operations committee meeting, Councillor Louise Severson expressed shock the railway would simply bill the city without discussion. However, under federal legislation, Cosgrove said, there's nothing the city can do but pay the bill now and lobby the government to make changes.

31/07/2009

Ottawa Citizen

Chalk River

Braeside

Extrat from article "Residents washed out but not washed up" (Braeside)

Several homeowners angrily accused the Ottawa Valley Railway, operated by U.S.-based RailAmerica, for not maintaining the culverts under the railway tracks and channel water into the Ottawa River.

Before Anderson built his retirement home, which overlooks the river, he said he had an engineer certify that the land was safe to build on. He was the most vocal in expressing his frustration with the railway. "They just did no maintenance whatsoever," he said.

At his home, he pointed to a large culvert -- about eight to 10 feet in diameter -- that channels water from a nearby creek under the OVR Railway tracks into the river. He said the culvert was obstructed by debris, which led to the whole area "filling up like a lake."

The Florida-based public relations firm that deals with all of RailAmerica's media requests did not immediately return Citizen requests for comment.

At the meeting, Anderson and the other affected residents said they will form an association to collectively represent their interests.

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.

Tuesday 18/08/2009 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

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.

Thursday 20/08/2009 Brockville Recorder Brockville

Digging their work

Keith Kennedy and his crew haven't even started putting the pieces back in place, but already the north portal of Brockville's historic railway tunnel is looking better than it has in years.

A mass of overgrown brush has been cleared away in preparation for Kennedy's crew, revealing the remarkable stonework that has even an experienced mason like Kennedy standing in awe.

"This is a masterpiece of work. ... The stone carving on this tunnel is amazing," said Kennedy.

He pays tribute to the 19th century craftsmanship while standing at the base of the impressive structure as his crew members worked some 30 feet above Tuesday afternoon.

"We're going to bring it back to life," said Kennedy, who grew up in Brockville.

Keith Kennedy Historical Masonry was the awarded the \$364,415 contract to restore the tunnel's north face last month by city council.

It's a massive job, as the old limestone blocks - weighing about 350 pounds each - must be removed separately.

Each stone is cleaned, checked for cracks, and marked so they know where to put it back in line, with a fresh trowel full of historical limestone mortar to hold it in place.

It will be just like a giant jigsaw puzzle when all the pieces are finally removed and Kennedy said they'll likely be at the site until November.

When asked about the challenge that lies ahead for his five-person crew, Kennedy can't resist joking, "We can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Given the conditions a century and a half ago when the tunnel was built, Kennedy and his crew aren't about to complain about the work.

Friday 21/08/2009 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

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.

Tuesday 25/08/2009 Reimax Renfrew Eganville

\$289,000 - Absolutely Unique!

Eganville, Bonnechere Valley - This is your chance to own a piece of Eganville history. The old train station has been completely renovated into an absolutely unique family home that will definitely be "one of a kind". Huge kitchen, dining and living rooms. The hallway from the dining room and living room, features "his and hers" 2-piece bathrooms. The master bedroom is again huge and from here you follow the main hallway having two more bedrooms, and a full 4-piece bath with a laundry. At the end of the hall is the workshop to end all workshops measuring 31 feet by 22 feet. This property is zoned commercial and includes 3 acres of land. The possibilities are endless. Own a unique house, open a business of your choice, or have a combination

26/08/2009 The Equity, Shawville Waltham

Pontiac Museum undergoing facelift

SHAWVILLE - The Pontiac Museum housed in the former PPJ Railway station on Lake Street, is undergoing extensive renovations. About three years ago, the members of the Pontiac Historical Society discovered that the roof on the building needed to be replaced. At the same time, it was decided to rebuild two dormers as was in the time where the station master lived in the upstairs apartment.

Michael Neelin studied old photographs and drew plans for the reconstruction. After Clayton Pieschke's Construction did the roofing and framing of the dormers, it became a volunteer work in progress by many community members. Dave Lalonde recreated the pine siding and Robert Wills installed it; Tom Fischel contributed the wooden frames and Tom Murdoch donated the glass for the windows, which will soon be installed in the dormers. Bubba Popham has pressure-washed and is now painting the building, with help from other volunteers. Two new signs created and donated by Bob Crawford, added the finishing touch.

The museum is open every day during the Shawville Fair and on Saturday afternoons in the summer and for Canada Day. Fair-goers are invited to take a break from the hustle and bustle of the fair, step back in time and imagine how much work was done with simple hand tools in olden days.

Submitted by Robert Wills

There is a picture of a painter up a ladder painting the wall, and the caption reads:

"Robert Wills paints the top of the wall in the newly-created dormer of the Pontiac Museum."

On tour in the tunnel

Posted By Michael Jiggins, Staff Writer

It's a section of Brockville even long time city residents never get the chance to see these days.

So you knew a group of Ottawa-based railway historians would be on board when given the chance to step back in time Thursday by walking through the normally locked iron gates of the Brockville railway tunnel to explore the mysterious darkness beyond.

The experience left members of the Ottawa Railway History Circle marvelling at more than just the incredible craftsmanship and back-breaking labour that built the tunnel between 1854 and 1860.

Group members also commented on the potential tourist attraction the tunnel could become if it were opened to the public from end to end.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for a tourist to go through the first railway tunnel in Canada," said railway circle member Colin Churcher.

Even for non-railway buffs, Churcher is certain the tunnel would hold fascination, pointing in particular to the beautiful mineral deposits that have formed like natural works of art over the past two centuries.

For railway circle member Don McQueen, yesterday's tour brought back a flood of childhood memories.

Growing up in Brockville, McQueen said he often used the tunnel as a shortcut - when it was still in operation.

He recalled having to wait until the gasses from the last train exiting had dissipated before scampering the one-third mile length.

McQueen said you knew you were safe from suffocation when the light from the other end glowed a harvest moon orange.

"Today's big difference is it's much wetter and messier," he noted.

A steady flow of water has always infiltrated the tunnel, but the grading that channelled it to the sides is no longer in place. That meant yesterday's tour required the visitors to trudge through about an inch-and-a-half of mud.

McQueen, who hadn't been in the tunnel since 1959, said it was nice to have the chance to admire the construction, notably the quarter of the tunnel that's lined with hand-cut stone.

"I'm impressed and I have been for a long time at the ability of those masons to be able to build something like this," he told The Recorder and Times.

"And the sad part about it is we don't know who those guys were."

Now living in London, McQueen said he's convinced those touting the tunnel as a tourist attraction are onto something.

"It would be great. Who has the experience today of walking or riding through tunnels except in enclosed railway cars or in their vehicle?" he asked.

Although parts of it are now more than 150 years old, the march of time has certainly not compromised the tunnel's interior.

Churcher said actually touching the stone surfaces and shining a flashlight into corners of the stonework give a visitor an appreciation for the enormity of the task that photographs and drawings simply can't reproduce.

"If you think about it, they gave a bunch of people some picks and shovels and said, 'Build a tunnel,'" he said. "That's the first thing that comes to me - this was done essentially by hand. It's amazing what they were able to achieve.

"And this is what we're trying to understand with our group."

Churcher also praised city officials for allowing them to take the tour and for spending the \$364,000 to restore the tunnel's north portal.

Two of Brockville's most recognized historians led Thursday's tour, and both Doug Grant and Brian Porter said it was the first time in several years that they'd ventured beyond the gates into the tunnel.

The tunnel has been closed to the public since the city assumed ownership in the 1980s.

Porter said he never loses his sense of fascination for the structure.

"I'm astounded every time I go through by the craftsmanship that you see here. These guys knew their stuff, they knew how to do their stonework," he said.

Porter and Grant said they were buoyed by the confidence the railway circle members expressed for turning the tunnel into a larger tourist attraction.

As he strolled through the 14-foot wide, 15-foot tall opening, cut through the rock from Pearl Street under city hall to the waterfront, Grant said one thing he wasn't afraid of was collapse.

"I'm never afraid in here," he said.

"This had far more pressure from steaming trains, diesel trains and those vibrations than it does now," added Grant. "People walking through are not going to cause any damage to the structure - it's lasted this long."

Obviously, Grant recognized before the tunnel can be opened to the public it will require some work to "provide comfort for people."

While it's impossible to get rid of the water, he said it could be easily channelled to the sides as was the case when it was in service.

However, as they toured its length, members of the railway circle were quick to say the tunnel should be left in its natural state as much as possible and not overwhelmed by artificial light and displays.

With a priceless resource in place, as he approached the tunnel's south exit, Churcher said all that's need now "is a champion" for the project.

Wednesday 23/09/2009 Ottawa Citizen Kingston (CN) Brockville

A male pedestrian was struck and killed in a collision with a freight train Tuesday evening in Brockville. Firefighters said the incident happened downtown near the train station, under the William Street overpass. The call came in to emergency responders at about 6 p.m.. Further details were not available by press time.

23/10/2009 Pembroke Observer Beachburg

Corporation formed to help preserve rail tracks (e)

In an effort to keep the dream of an Ottawa Valley commuter rail line alive, the committee looking into the project has formed a corporation. This according to Whitewater councillor Izett McBride, who delivered an update on the initiative to council during its most recent meeting. The name of the not-for-profit corporation is Transport Pontiac-Renfrew. It was formed in July in an effort to keep CN from ripping up the tracks that run from Ottawa, through the Pontiac and Renfrew counties to Pembroke. McBride said Transport Pontiac-Renfrew is governed by a board of 12 members including two business representatives, two railway freight client representatives, one from Ontario and one from Quebec, members representing Renfrew County and Pontiac community futures, the Renfrew County warden, the warden of the Pontiac, Pembroke Mayor Ed Jacyno and three charter members. CN has listed the 130 km of track known as the Beachburg Subdivision among those lines it wants to abandon. Those seeking to get a local train service going are moving quickly to head that effort off. The work to bring a local commuter/freight train to the valley has been spearheaded by SADC Pontiac Community Futures and its counterpart, the Community Futures Development Corporation of Renfrew County. The two groups are using government funding to pay for the costs of studying the feasibility of this idea. Time is running out, as CN could begin lifting the tracks next spring. McBride said freight users of the rails have become involved as they are worried about losing this crucial link. Some of these freight users include a pellet plant at Bristol, ATC Panels in Pembroke and a pulp mill that is up for sale in Quebec. That mill could lose significant value if it lost its rail link, according to McBride. He said the cost to purchase the rail line is estimated at about \$6 million.

Before buses ruled the road, Ottawa's streets were laid with tracks to carry streetcars that zipped through the downtown core and beyond. Though it's been 50 years since the cars were decommissioned, long-buried rails dug up recently during construction on Centretown streets are recalling the reign of the streetcar at a time when the Sparks Street BIA is urging its comeback alongside Ottawa's future billion-dollar transit makeover. Holly Layte, along with members of the heritage committee, which she chairs for the Sparks Street Business Improvement Area, will be presenting a business plan to the BIA management board this December to reintroduce streetcars to Sparks Street. Though modeled after the traditional streetcar, the proposed system will have an update on technology. The eyesore of overhead wires is a thing of the past, Layte says.

As one option, cars are able to run on circuits that pass from the track underneath them something the project may consider, Layte says. The initial plan is for the new system to run from LeBreton Flats to the new convention centre at Colonel By Drive. Phase two includes a loop through Gatineau and the ByWard Market.

Layte says she believes Ottawa needs to revive the streetcar as part of the city's heritage, but it would still be a viable form of transportation and garner tourist attention.

"The renewal of the streetcar throughout North America is actually quite astonishing," she says. "Streetcars to Ottawa are like coffee and cream."

Though the project is only in the planning stage, she says they hope OC Transpo would adopt the system as a supplementary transit service.

With the push for rail elsewhere in the city, the project has added potential.

"The city should have never taken up the rail," says Somerset Ward Coun. Diane Holmes. "It's clear the citizens of Ottawa like rail."

The city itself has been pushing for a light-rail option following the success of the O-Train, she says, which has been running since 2001.

At the centre of that debate is what type of system best suits the needs of OC Transpo's almost 350,000 average weekday ridership.

The options range from automated light-metros like Vancouver's SkyTrain to streetcars the likes of Toronto's.

Colin Churcher, an Ottawa-based rail historian, says when the city decided to scrap the old rail system, the cars and rails were decrepit and in dire need of repair, which would have cost the city a lot of money.

But OC Transpo's website records that at its peak in 1929, the railway had a 30 million yearly ridership over more than 90 kilometres of track.

Considering the city's renewed interest in rail, Churcher says: "I guess we were caught in the times. If we'd known then what we know now, maybe we would have thought twice before we got rid of them [the streetcars]."

He said with new technology there are ways for rail to be sustainable and functional. "It doesn't have to be ugly," he says.

While the future of the Sparks streetcar project is uncertain, Centretown residents are backing the return of rail to the city, whether it is the renewal of the streetcar or light-rail transit.

"We need a downtown rail system," says Shawn Menard, Centretown Citizens' Community Association president. "I think it will only benefit Centretown citizens."

Menard says the CCCA has endorsed a streetcar-type system. A modernized version of what existed 50 years ago, Menard says, could fit the city once more.

The former Grand Trunk railway station on Montreal Street is collapsing, claims an advocate of revitalizing the heritage landmark in Kingston, ON. "We're going to lose this building if we do not act within the next 12 months," warned Ron Smith, operator of the website saveourstationkingston.com. Smith said he visits the Outer Station, as it is often called, about once a week. About six weeks ago, he noticed that two of the soffit brackets had loosened from the wall. He also noticed fissures in the building's stone walls. "It's going to collapse. It's already started," Smith said in an interview. Smith said that the tarpaulin covering the roof, which was damaged in a fire, is shredded and letting water in. Once the water gets into the rock and freezes and thaws, Smith said, "that is what's going to demolish the building." The property is owned by CN. The railway's spokesman Frank Binder said that there isn't a maintenance schedule for the property -- which, he said, CN is involved in ongoing negotiations to sell -- and that the tarpaulin covering the roof of the building is replaced as required. The outer station is a designated Heritage Canada site and protected under the Heritage Railway Station Protection Act. "All [the act] did was stop them from demolishing the buildings," Smith said. "It did not set any standards for them as to how they have to maintain the buildings."

A proposed community rail service between Ottawa Valley/the Pontiac and the City of Ottawa/Gatineau is a project on the right track, according to Arnprior's mayor. "Rail is an idea whose time has come again," Terry Gibeau told the EMC, as he explained how the Community Futures Development Corporation of Renfrew and Pontiac Counties have partnered to promote the rail service. Partial funding through the Eastern Ontario Development Program has allowed the partnership to have a feasibility study to be commissioned with RailFuture Group. As well, a survey to assess needs and support for a commuter rail system was done on-line and Gibeau noted the results are favorable. "People are saying it has to be convenient and it has to be cost effective," he said. While Gibeau has been involved in talks about using the former CN line for community service for some time, the Town of Arnprior's involvement was solidified back in Dec. 2008 when the town passed a resolution supporting "the continued efforts of the Renfrew County Community Futures and the SADC Pontiac Community Futures to develop and evaluate the potential of a pilot commuter train project." And during the Aug. 26 Renfrew County council meeting, councillors passed a resolution supporting the efforts of what is known as the Pontiac-Renfrew Transport Group to establish a railway line that would service both Renfrew and Pontiac counties. The resolution, which also called for the county to lobby the federal and provincial government for funding, was passed following a presentation by Bahadir Eke of RailFuture Group and James Allen, the former railway administration who is now with JDA Consulting. Gibeau sits on the executive of Pontiac-Renfrew Transport Group and he noted the organization is in the process of getting incorporated. Gibeau said although in the planning stages, talks have centered on running freight on the line at night, using it morning and evening for commuters to and from Ottawa and for tourism at other times. While the survey results are in, the transport group still has a lot of work ahead of it. Gibeau said there must be some investigation into what the freight service would be like and "figure out what the tourism component might be." He also noted if CN abandons the line, which it most likely will, the group would like to get it for net salvage value. That value still needs to be established, the mayor noted.

Brockville to get new VIA station. Brockville's VIA station will get a \$7 million replacement next year, \$3 million of which will come from the federal "Economic Action Plan". Another pot of federal tax dollars, in the form of capital funding for VIA provided by the government in 2007, will cover the rest of the project. VIA's national sales director, Pierre Santoni, said construction of the new station will begin next year. The company is looking at options for the new site, which it expects to place directly east of the existing station, and the final design of the new station will be chosen in early 2010. The work will mean the addition of a main line track, and an underground tunnel or an overpass will have to be built to get people safely from the north side to a new platform on the south side. Sections of a third main line track will also be added to the two tracks between Mallorytown and Gananoque. A mural depicting Brockville's history, painted by local students more than a decade ago, as well as a heritage sign on the property, won't be damaged. The Brockville station is the 20th busiest in Canada, said Williams, adding the new facility will have a positive economic impact on the area.

Monday 14/12/2009 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki Chelsea

Consultants to study plan for Chelsea stop on Wakefield stream train route

OTTAWA A group of consultants has been hired to do a feasibility study on a Chelsea station for the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train.

The federal government will pay \$206,550 of the study's \$275,400 cost. The study, to be completed by January 2010, will examine the impact of a proposed train station on the environment, local economy, drainage, water and sewer services and transportation.

Tim Kehoe, the study director, said the station could provide Chelsea with some economic benefit if passengers visit Old Chelsea shops and restaurants.

Innovation Chelsea, a business group on Highway 105, has proposed locating a steam train station on a 50-acre site it owns that includes a medical clinic.

Community Table Outaouais, a group that helps develop economic opportunities for West Quebec residents, is participating in the study.

Other groups contributing to the study include the Caisse Desjardins de Hull, the Centre local de développement des Collines-de-l'Outaouais, the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train and Tourisme Outaouais.

Chelsea Mayor Caryl Green said the former passenger rail station north of Old Chelsea played an important role in the community until it closed during the 1960s. Green said it makes sense to study the proposal to build a steam train station at another site.

15/12/2009 Barrys Bay This Week Renfrew Barrys Bay

What to do with Madawaska River bridge

About 20 people braved the first winter storm of the season to attend an information session at Spectacle Lake Lodge. Up for discussion was what to do with the old Madawaska River Bridge just east of the Village of Madawaska. Gordon Rodgers of GKR Consulting gave a brief presentation on the Draft Environmental Study Report.

The old railway bridge is used by snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles to cross the Madawaska River. For 23 years it has been part of the trail corridor. It is part of the TOP "B" Trail and the Round Algonquin Park Trail and there are 19 resorts and 10 restaurants in the Whitney-Madawaska-Barry's Bay corridor. It is estimated millions of dollars are generated by the trails in central and eastern Ontario.

The bridge was closed by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 2008, and then opened for the winter of 2008/09 under certain conditions. Residents were told the railings were in poor condition, the ties and surface boards were worn and the timber piles were rotten. The steel tress, however, was in good condition.

Rodgers said the bridge's stone abutments are of historical interest. Water levels are controlled at the Bark Lake Dam, with a summer level 29 feet (8.8 metres) higher than the winter level. In summer, the river is 125 metres wide, but only 10 metres in winter. There may be fish spawning under the bridge, but better spawning and feeding areas can be found upstream. An endangered species turtle has been found in the study area, so a permit will be required under the Ontario Endangered Species Act.

Four alternatives were listed: do nothing; repair and maintain the bridge; remove the wooden parts and seek a partner to rebuild that portion; or completely remove the bridge.

The preferred alternative is to remove the wooden portions of the bridge and retain the steel centre trestle, then seek a partner, with secured funding, to rebuild.

A question and answer session followed the presentation and concerns were voiced over the Endangered Species Act; there was also some question whether work could be complete before water levels rose in the spring.

The public has until Jan. 4, 2010 to comment on the report. The final report will then be prepared and the public can again make comments following its release. A statement of completion will depend on the number and types of comments received and the issues raised. To submit comments, contact Rodgers at GKR Consulting, 1141 Wood Duck Lane, RR#1, Hartington, ON K0H 1W0 (613-374-3521) or by email at gordrogers@xplornet.com.

Friday 18/12/2009 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

The federal government is funding a feasibility study that could ultimately lead to a commuter train service running from the Pontiac and Renfrew to Ottawa.

Lawrence Cannon, the MP for the Pontiac and the federal Foreign Affairs minister, said the federal portion of the \$272,000 study will be \$136,000.

The rest of the amount will be covered by Transport Pontiac-Renfrew, a non-profit community organization.

19/12/2009 CBC News Beachburg

OTTAWA VALLEY COMMUTER TRAIN ON TRACK; A commuter train linking Renfrew County, the Pontiac region of west Ouebec and the city of Ottawa took a step closer to becoming a reality. The federal government announced a \$136,000 grant for a feasibility study into improving the existing railway connection between Ottawa and Pembroke. Currently, one freight train a week travels along the CN-owned tracks west of the national capital. Transport Pontiac-Renfrew, the group that's pushing for the railway improvements, would like to see the number of freight trains on the Ottawa-Pembroke line tripled and a five-day-a-week commuter service introduced within two years. Harry

Gow, head of Transport Pontiac-Renfrew, said the future of both the Renfrew County and Pontiac region's economies depends on improving the rail line. (CBC, Dec 19)