

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2017

31/05/2017 CBC News

Smiths Falls

A City of Ottawa study has concluded overpasses or underpasses are needed at five rail crossings, including the site of a fatal crash between a double-decker city bus and a Via Rail passenger train four years ago - but Via and other levels of government will have to help cover the cost.

The study was commissioned last year after the Transportation Safety Board recommended the city once again consider the need for such crossings, in the wake of the fatal Barrhaven crash on Sept. 18, 2013.

The study, published Wednesday in advance of next week's meeting of the city's transportation committee, concludes the rail crossings at Woodroffe Avenue, the Transitway, Fallowfield Road, Merivale Road and Jockvale Road should all be grade separated "due to the existing and anticipated increases in road, Transitway and rail traffic."

Overpasses recommended at Woodroffe, Transitway and Fallowfield

The cost to revamp all five crossings is estimated at \$430 million, meaning the city will need to do the work in phases and will also need help from Via and the federal and provincial governments.

The city looked into grade separation at several level rail crossings more than a decade ago, but high costs, geotechnical issues and other factors led the city to decide against grade separation at those locations.

Overpasses are now recommended for the Woodroffe, Transitway and Fallowfield locations because of previously identified soil and hydrogeological conditions, while underpasses are recommended for Merivale Road and Jockvale Road.

The three overpasses should be the first projects tackled, followed by Merivale Road and then Jockvale Road, the study said.

But because of the number of pedestrians and cyclists at Jockvale, city staff say a multi-use path underpass for the crossing should be built in the near term 'Human lives would've been saved'

Daljit Nirman was a regular passenger on the number 76 bus that was involved in the 2013 crash, though he wasn't on the bus that day. He organized a petition with advocating for an overpass or underpass at the Fallowfield Road railway crossing.

"There should not be any further delays on this," Nirman said. "Human lives would've been saved. Many families would not have gone through that trauma they have gone through."

City staff are recommending the establishment of the Barrhaven Rail Safety Program, which would begin work on environmental assessments for the three potential overpass locations and the multi-use pathway.

Staff are also recommending delegating authority to Mayor Jim Watson, transportation committee chair Keith Egli and local councillor Jan Harder to seek funding from the federal and provincial government and Via for the design and construction phase of the projects.

In a statement Wednesday evening, Via said rail crossings are the responsibility of the body that has authority over the roads and that "the ultimate design and funding of these undertakings remains their decision."

The company said it has participated in funding studies and design activities, and it did provide some funding for the report on separated-grade crossings.

Egli said the staff report puts the city on solid footing to request funding from other levels of government.

"This is not something that we can do on our own," Egli said. "It's just a question of being ready to go when the funding opportunities come up. As you know, many of the funding programs that come at the provincial or federal levels, one of the requirements is you need to be shovel-ready."

04/07/2017

Montreal Gazette

Kingston (CN)

Lancaster

Dorval Teen Killed by VIA Train Only Weeks After Graduating

Lancaster Ontario - Only weeks after graduating from John Rennie High School, Tristan Morrisette-Perkins of Dorval was killed Monday after he was struck by a VIA Rail train while walking on a rail bridge in South Glengarry, about 100 kilometres southeast of Ottawa.

He was with two other teenagers who survived.

A 15-year-old boy was taken to hospital with minor injuries following the incident, which occurred minutes before 20:00 according to reports.

The third teenager at the scene was Tristan's 17-year-old cousin, Bailey Bilney-Morrisette, a member of the Lake St-Louis midget AAA Lions hockey team.

Bilney-Morrisette was taken to a hospital but appears not to have sustained serious injuries.

VIA Rail Train 669 was en route from Montreal to Toronto.

The railway line reopened at about 22:30.

While the exact circumstances of Monday evening's tragedy remain unclear, Morrisette-Perkins, a talented hockey player who would have turned 17 this month, had apparently been staying at a nearby camping site.

Although school is out for the summer, the death of Morrisette-Perkins prompted John Rennie Principal Cristina Prata to send an email to graduate students and their families on Tuesday afternoon.

The school is offering emotional support to those who need it.

"Today, we received the sad news of the sudden passing of Tristan Morrisette-Perkins.

Tristan was a proud member of the 2017 graduating class, and we join his family, friends, and the rest of the John Rennie community in grieving his loss.

"John Rennie's doors are open, and administrative and guidance staff remain available should any member of the graduating class or school community require support during this difficult time," Prata wrote.

As news of the death circulated through social media Monday night, members of the West Island's tight-knit hockey community expressed profound sadness at the sudden loss of Morrisette-Perkins, top scorer with the West Island midget AA Royals this season.

Many offered words of condolence to Tristan's family, his father Jason, mother Julie, and younger sister Allison.

Larry Sherrard, Tristan's minor hockey coach for many years, was shaken by the news.

Sherrard said that he'd heard that Tristan had suffered a lethal head wound from the passing train.

"It's every parent's nightmare," said Sherrard, whose family is close to the Morrisette-Perkins family.

Sherrard said Tristan was loved by his friends and teammates.

"Tristan was a great teammate, his teammates always loved him. He was a super, super, hard-worker. He was one of those guys who could go out there and compete, but he never brought the game home with him. That's what I liked about him. He gave you an honest effort, but didn't sulk or throw fits when the game ended."

Away from the rink, Sherrard described Tristan as a "pretty quiet kid."

"Tristan doesn't talk a lot. I drove him home many times after games and he rarely carried on a conversation."

"It is hard to imagine how something like this could happen to him just weeks after graduation and only a couple of weeks before his 17th birthday," Sherrard said.

"It's just too sad."

Montreal-area teen hit by train on railway bridge

A 16-year-old youth from the Montreal suburb of Dorval was killed Monday night when he was struck by a Via Rail train while he was walking on a rail bridge in South Glengarry, about 100 kilometres southeast of Ottawa. A second boy, 15, of South Glengarry township was taken to hospital with minor injuries after the incident, which occurred minutes before 8 p.m. The third youth, 17, of Montreal was not injured. Investigators are not identifying the victim until the family is notified. The railway line reopened at about 10:30 p.m.

14/07/2017 *Smiths Falls Record News* *Chalk River*

Smiths Falls

End of the line for trailblazing Smiths Falls locomotive engineer

It's the end of the line for long-time, Smiths Falls-area train engineer, Brenda Cummings.

At 56, Cummings has put the brakes on her railroading career as one of the first female locomotive engineers to retire from Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway in North America, an aspect of her career she said is "kind of cool."

Cummings started her trailblazing career in November 1988 as a brakeman (or should we say, brake-woman) with the St. Lawrence and Hudson Division of the CP Railway, something she never thought she would do.

Before life on the rails, Cummings worked in banking for 11 years.

But when she heard the railroad was hiring, she gave it a shot.

"I signed up as a joke," she said.

The joke soon turned into a reality when Cummings was hired on during a time when the railway first started to accept female employees aboard.

In 1988, Cummings was hired as one of five girls in Smiths Falls. But, she explained, those women all moved on to other positions, leaving her the only woman on the trains until 1994, when they hired two more.

"Those were fairly hard years when I was the only one," she said.

In 1990, Cummings qualified as a conductor.

Then in 1996, she was employed by the Ottawa Valley Railway (OVR), when the railway contracted with St. Lawrence and Hudson to operate the track from Smiths Falls to North Bay. There, in that year, she worked as a conductor.

In the late '90s Cummings started the intensive training to become a locomotive engineer - a job that she would do until her retirement in July 2017. And in 1999, Cummings qualified as an engineer for OVR.

To qualify as a locomotive engineer, a person must pass a series of exams and score at least 95 per cent on each test. Cummings' average score overall - 97 per cent.

When she had the option, Cummings went back to CP Railway, where she had to re-qualify under their own training qualifications.

Cummings' ability to become a locomotive engineer and build a career in the industry is thanks in large part to her supportive husband of 38 years, Brent Cummings.

Cummings said she would get calls for work that would take her away from home for sometimes 120 hours per week.

"That's how my husband learned how to use the washing machine," she joked.

In an email to the Record News, CP Railway wished Cummings all the best in her retirement and thank her for her service.

Will investors climb on board commuter rail plan?

An ambitious plan to connect the National Capital Region by a commuter rail system using old or abandoned rail lines has attracted the attention of foreign investors who have agreed to the first step in a feasibility study.

Moose Consortium envisions building a privately financed rail system with six branch lines stretching to Bristol, Wakefield and Montebello on the Quebec side, and Arnprior, Smiths Falls and Alexandria on the Ontario side. The system would be connected interprovincially by the Prince of Wales Bridge which crosses the Ottawa River at Lemieux Island.

In a letter of intent on July 1, a consortium of investors with ties to China, India, Singapore and elsewhere, agreed to offer "financial resources" and "technical expertise" to move the project forward. But no amount of money will be promised until investors have had a chance to review Moose's ground work, said Mir Ali, president of Consortia N.A., which partnered with LeMine Investment Group on the letter of intent.

The consortium of foreign investors has given itself 120 days to determine whether the project is solid enough to begin a full feasibility study.

"To move forward on a project of this size we need backup information. What's the population? What's the condition of the tracks? What are the agreements with the track owners? There's a whole lot of things that need to be in place," Ali said.

"We are also skeptical. It's a very good project, technically. Connecting all the communities is well and good ... (but) It's a long shot. It won't happen overnight. It has a lot of challenges."

Moose - the name comes from Mobility Ottawa Outaouais: Systems and Enterprises - is the baby of Joseph Potvin, a 58-year-old economist who views the unused rail lines as an untapped resource. In 2011, he sat down with four friends to brainstorm.

"We looked at a map of existing railways and said, 'Here's what we have. What can we come up with?'"

Potvin's vision is for the system "400 kilometres of tracks and 50 stations" to be completely privately funded. Commuter rail increases property values, the theory goes, and a portion of that increased value would be used to finance the railway. It's a modern version of how railways used to be financed, he said, with towns paying the railway company to build a station and provide access. Raising the money privately sidesteps much of the red tape involved in running a railway in the National Capital Region, with its multiple levels of government and jurisdictions.

But the outside-the-box business model has had trouble attracting interest. Ian Lee, a professor at Carleton University's Sprott School of Business, likens it to "snake oil."

"I'm a numbers guy and I look at how many people there are and I can't see the numbers adding up," Lee said.

"It's not that I'm opposed to mass transit, but it's very, very expensive. They say it's going to drive up the property values so much it's going to pay for itself.

No, it's not"

Rail companies typically have enormous capital expenses, Lee said, with around 20 per cent of their revenue going to maintain their tracks and rolling stock.

"We're talking billions of dollars. Not millions, billions," Lee said.

Moose has additional problems with some of its lines: The tracks to Bristol, Que., were removed several years ago while the line north of Wakefield was plagued by the washouts that permanently sidelined Wakefield's steam train.

Nor has Moose made friends with the City of Ottawa after complaining to the Canadian Transportation Agency when the city ripped out tracks at the Ottawa end of the Prince of Wales Bridge during LRT construction. The city isn't about to turn the bridge over to a private company.

"The City includes the rail line over the Prince of Wales bridge within its Transportation Master Plan (TMP) as part of the longterm transit network," said Vivi Chi, the manager of transportation planning, in an email to the Citizen.

"This northerly extension of the Trillium Line to Gatineau will need to be developed at a future date because as per the TMP, the City's current priority is the first two stages of the Confederation Line and the Trillium Line extension to Riverside South. The City has not received a detailed service plan from Moose to review at this point."

And yet, it's the cross-river link that Moose's new investors see as key to the project, said Ali of Consortia N.A.

"It cannot be done unless there is one section that economically makes sense to take it up first," he said. "That is from Gatineau to Bayview. It's also the most expensive one because the Prince of Wales bridge requires \$50 ... \$60 ... \$70 million in capital expenditure."

Despite the obstacles, Potvin remains undaunted. People in the National Capital Region didn't give up on railways, he said. The railways were stripped away in the 1950s-era redesign by urban planner Jacques Gréber. Potvin sees a future commuter who rides into downtown Ottawa from Arnprior, heads up to Wakefield after work for a show at the Black Sheep Inn, then heads home to Arnprior, all by commuter train.

"Rail did not fall out of use," Potvin said. "Rail was taken out of use."

"I'm an economist. It bugs me when I see perfectly valuable resources sitting there unused."

from WAYNE LOWRIE : THE RECORDER AND TIMES: 8-12-2017

Re-Opening of the CPR Brockville Tunnel August 12th, 2017

For David LeSueur, today proves that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The city councillor and a band of volunteers have been toiling for years on their dream of re-opening the Brockville railway tunnel, which saw its last train pass through 48 years ago. Now that dream has come true with the official reopening of Canada's first railway tunnel. "It's a shock," said LeSueur, referring to the emotion of finally seeing the 157-year-old tunnel reopen after hours and years of effort to restore it.

LeSueur became involved with the tunnel dream after his first election to council in 2010. People had been telling him that it was a shame to eat the tunnel was gated up with no public access through it, so LeSueur made it a plank in his election platform. Unlike other volunteers who were train buffs or who pushed for the reopening out of historic nostalgia, LeSueur comes at it for economic-development reasons.

LeSueur describes the tunnel as Brockville's "most unique asset." Many towns and cities are located on lakes and rivers with harbours, beaches and natural beauty, he said. "But this is the one thing that distinguishes Brockville from any other city or town in Canada," he said. "It was a waste not to share it with others."

After his election to council, the tunnel committee was reformed with LeSueur as chair. It had been disbanded about four years earlier, and many of the former members are happy to come aboard again. The idea of opening the tunnel as a tourist attraction has been around for at least 40 years.

After Canadian Pacific Railway discontinued use of the tunnel in 1969, the first of many engineering studies looked at future uses. That first study, released in 1974, proposed options for the tunnel, including opening it as a tourist attraction, using it for storage, or actually filling it in. The tunnel remained in the railway's hands until 1983 when CP Rail sold the tunnel and its waterfront lands at the south mouth of the tunnel to the city for \$1. The land was developed into the Armagh Sifton Park but the tunnel was largely left untouched except for about 80 feet at the south end of the tunnel, which was opened to the public. The rest of it was blocked by the iron gate.

After his election, LeSueur became the major political force spearheading the tunnel reopening, along with the 10-member committee. His efforts led to three more studies on the viability of the idea. The first chore was to figure out whether or not opening the tunnel would be safe from an engineering point of view, LeSueur said. That study, released in 2012 concluded that the tunnel was structurally sound and it could be opened.

Next came a market study to determine whether it could be viable as a tourist destination. City council members wanted to know if they build it, would people come? LeSueur said the market study in 2013 was positive, so city council decided to go back to the engineers for a second study on how the project could be done. That study was ready in 2014. All the project needed now was money to pay for the \$4 million project. LeSueur said the city decided to contribute \$75,000 a year over four years to start the fund raising efforts. He stresses that the \$300,000 is the only municipal contribution to the project - the rest of the money has come from the federal and provincial governments and private donations. The federal government has kicked in \$500,000, the province about \$800,000 and the rest has come from private donors. LeSueur said the tunnel fund raisers are still trying to raise about \$600,000. ... Once private donations came rolling in - some from international companies - the concerns of many councillors were soothed, he said.

The Brockville Railway Tunnel was built between 1854 and 1860 to allow the Brockville and Ottawa Railway to connect the city's waterfront industrial district to Ottawa. The railway chose to blast through the centre of the city with the tunnel, instead of the option of doing an end run to the west [following Buell's Creek as the later 'Loop Line' did -ed]. Engineers used gunpowder to blast through the solid hill of rock. It measures 14 feet, 9 inches tall and 14 feet wide. The 1,721-foot-long tunnel runs directly under city hall, which was built two years later. Two air vents from the tunnel run up through city hall and out through chimneys on its roof. The dirt from the tunnel was used for the causeway to Blockhouse Island.

A history prepared by the tunnel committee describes the inside of the tunnel this way: .

"The bottom and top thirds of the tunnel are completely lined with stone held together by water lime. The centre third of the tunnel is unlined, with the craggy rock still exposed and dripping water resulting in colourful mineral deposits in interesting formations along the walls. At each end of the tunnel portals made of limestone were constructed, with the southern portal being more extensive than the north."

from WAYNE LOWRIE : THE RECORDER AND TIMES: 8-15-2017

The reaction of visitors to Brockville's Railway Tunnel seemed to be almost universal. "It's cool," said [one visitor from] Montreal. "'I think it's really, really cool.'" And so it was, both literally and figuratively. The temperature of the tunnel was a good 10 degrees cooler than at the sun-baked opening ceremonies held outside the doors to the structure.

Brockville Tourism estimated that 7,000 people walked through the tunnel during the first four hours after its official opening on Saturday. Indeed, the crowds were so packed at the entrance that police and security had to limit people to blocks of 500 at a time because of fire-safety regulations. For the first couple of hours after the opening, the visitors were limited to one-way traffic because of the crush of people. ... A pipe band led the walk through the tunnel followed by historic re-enactors and the first 500 visitors. The first 500 were an eclectic mix - parents with children in strollers, teens, two elderly men in electric wheelchairs, mothers with babies and some people with pets. ... Cell phones were also held high as people videoed the historic occasion. Many people seemed in awe at the magnificence of the granite walls and the limestone lining at the ends of the tunnel. The LED lighting running along the base of the tunnel illuminated the walls and the ceiling, and provided a light show of different colours. Mayor David Henderson described the lights by Philips Lighting as the same technology used at Buckingham Palace and to light up the Empire State building. In sections of the tunnel, a steady drip of spring water annoyed some visitors, although none seemed have bothered to purchase the \$2 ponchos offered at the mouth of the tunnel. But while a nuisance to some, that dripping water has contributed to the beauty of the tunnel. The water has carried minerals down the walls for the past 157 years, creating thick cakes of mineral deposits, which slimmer in the dancing LED lights.

(Many were) was spellbound by the minerals on the walls, comparing them to the caverns of North Carolina. ... There is another not-so-natural deposit left on the tunnel walls over the years. People who touched the walls were left with soot - blackened fingers from the decades of coal-fired engines that powered the locomotives.

Alexandria Station's Centennial

Alexandria Ontario - Francis Drouin MP for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Grant Crack Mayor of the Township of North Glengarry, Chris McDonell, and Yves Desjardins-Siciliano VIA CEO, marked the 100-year anniversary of the heritage Alexandria train station.

To celebrate this major event VIA Rail gave a gift of 10 sugar maples to residents of the Township of North Glengarry, representing the Station's 10 decades of history and the collaboration between the township and VIA Rail.

The sugar maple tree is the emblem of Canada and was selected for its sturdiness and stately beauty.

A commemorative plaque marking this anniversary was also unveiled at the press conference.

100 Years of History

Alexandria Station opened in 1917 and welcomed its very first passengers.

A century later, more than 15,000 travellers pass through this station every year.

Author unknown.

OKthePK Joint Bar Editor: Article abridged.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bus route 107 served transit users during the shutdown.

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

City penalized for 5 similar incidents since 2015

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other cases

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

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

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

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

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

Cornwall's Locomotive 17 will move to a new home, once it can be found

Council has decided that's time to find a new home for Lonely Locomotive No. 17.

The circa-1930 locomotive engine was the last of the electric trains run by the Cornwall Electric Street Railway that operated in the city from 1896 to 1971, when it was forced out of business as progress saw cars replace street trolleys and freight trains were moved outside the city.

For decades, Locomotive No. 17 has been rusting away, largely neglected and unadmired, on its single span of tracks at the corner of Brookdale Avenue and Ninth Street. Council has decided to pay \$85,000 to refurbish it, but on Tuesday it was decided that before that happens, the train needs to be moved somewhere where people will actually see it.

The universal opinion in the council chamber on Tuesday night was that the choice of location for Locomotive No. 17 had been a disaster.

"I think where it is very historic for our community, but it's also lost out there. I don't think the community gets the benefit of it from where it is," said Coun.

Maurice Dupelle.

"Most people who drive by on Brookdale or Ninth don't look over at it. At one point it was tagged with graffiti because no one pays attention to it," added Coun. Justin Towndale.

Before council decides where to move the train, the city plans to hold consultations with various interested stakeholders about what the best location for it is. That being said, some possible locations have already been proposed to the waterfront committee such as in the Cotton Mills area, or on the small triangle of land in front of the Cornwall Civic Complex where the road to western exit has a fork.

"There are a few concerns about the load-bearing class of the soil there, but the engineering department is aware of that and would investigate that further," said Mark Boileau, general manager of planning and development. "There is some concern that is where the canal was, so the ground there would be fill material."

After a favourite location is found, council would get the final approval. Once the move is complete, the city would issue a tender for a company to do the restoration work, the money for which was already put aside during the last budget.

Discontinuation of paper passes and tickets

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

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

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