

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2020

02/01/2020 CBC News

Otrain

Dirty Train Roofs Caused New Year's Eve LRT Delays

Ottawa Ontario - The electrical problem that halted two light rail trains New Year's Eve was caused by a buildup of dirt or grit on their roofs, according to the head of Ottawa's transit commission.

Rideau Transit Maintenance, the city's contractor, now has proper cleaning procedures in place for the accordion-like apparatus on the roofs of LRT trains, said Coun. Allan Hubley.

Image Dirty roofs halt trains? Really? Methinks it was a pantograph, those so-called accordion-like things.

The apparatus connects the train to the electrical wires overhead that provide power.

A Little Frustrating

"It's a little frustrating that those procedures weren't in place ahead of time, but they're there now," said Hubley.

The first of the two trains lost power at Cyrville station at 17:02, Tuesday, just minutes after OC Transpo began offering free transit service for New Year's Eve. A second train was immobilized at uOttawa station that same hour.

Hubley had no time to celebrate that evening as he, other city executives, and Mayor Jim Watson dealt with the two troubled trains and figured out how to get people moving.

The trains were stuck for hours while OC Transpo focused on getting riders onto backup buses.

No revellers should have been delayed by more than half an hour, Hubley added.

New Problem

The dirty rooftop apparatus and its electrical connection is a new problem for Ottawa's LRT.

The LRT's on-board computer system, doors, and track switches have been the problems most closely tracked in the months since the train's September launch.

During an update at transit commission on 18 Dec 2019 transit staff reported fewer instances of each type of problem and said OC Transpo operators and Rideau Transit Group were getting quicker at resolving them.

"It's how fast we can deal with problems and fix them is what's important to me right now. We've got to get that system to a dependable state," said Hubley on Thursday.

The train has also been delayed in the past by cracks in the welding of the tracks.

Kate Porter.

16/01/2020 CBC News

Otrain

LRT Could be Halted Until Friday

Ottawa Ontario - East-end LRT riders will have to rely on bus service through the afternoon rush hour, and possibly even tomorrow morning, after a broken overhead power wire halted service Thursday morning.

At around 10:50 the wire broke and apparently fell onto a train as it entered St-Laurent station, said Troy Charter, the City of Ottawa's director of transit operations, at a press conference Thursday afternoon.

Shortly afterward, OC Transpo announced that buses would be replacing LRT service between Hurdman and Blair stations.

Charter said the system "functioned as intended" and that power was immediately cut to both the overhead wires and the train.

While Rideau Transit Maintenance was working to restore service as quickly as possible, there was a chance that wouldn't happen until Friday, Charter said.

"We know this is difficult for our customers, and we are doing everything we can to restore service as soon as possible."

Service is running "with minimal delays" between Tunney's Pasture and Tremblay stations, Charter said.

John Manconi, OC Transpo's general manager, said in a statement that the stopped train needed to be removed "to allow crews to assess damage to the overhead wire power system."

"Once the train is moved, assessment and repairs can begin. The scope, scale, and timing required to complete repairs is still not known at this time."

Consider Working from Home

Pat Scrimgeour, OC Transpo's director of customer systems and planning, said while roughly 70 buses were being called into action to replace the LRT line, people should prepare for longer waits and travel times.

Reassigning those buses could also cause transit delays elsewhere in the city, he said.

"In the event that the service disruption continues into Friday morning, customers may want to consider working from home or making alternative travel arrangements," Scrimgeour said.

Another electrical problem that halted service on New Year's Eve was caused by a buildup of dirt or grit on the roofs of two trains, according to the head of Ottawa's transit commission.

OC Transpo has tweeted about six power issues on the Confederation Line since Christmas.

17/01/2020 CBC News

Otrain

Full LRT Service Restored After Yesterday's Broken Train Power Line

Ottawa Ontario - A broken power line on a light rail train at St-Laurent station has been fixed, meaning related closures and delays affecting both the Confederation Line and transit system as a whole should be done this morning.

The inspections and testing necessary to get full service back on the Confederation Line are done, said OC Transpo general manager John Manconi in an email early Friday morning.

East-end LRT riders had to rely on bus service through the afternoon rush hour after a wire broke around 10:50 and fell onto a train as it entered St-Laurent station, said Troy Charter, the City of Ottawa's director of transit operations, at a news conference Thursday afternoon.

Shortly afterward, OC Transpo announced that buses would be replacing LRT service between Hurdman and Blair stations.

The nearly 15 hours of schedule disruptions this caused was by far the longest the LRT line has seen since its mid-September launch.

"This really sucks actually, waiting in this cold weather with this amount of people waiting for a bus just to get home," said rider Joe Green, bundled in a toque and hoodie.

"Me as a construction worker I don't have a site at home," said Rory Brissett.

"The train is my only access to work other than driving."

CBC Not Yet Shared

OC Transpo officials had said in a Thursday afternoon news conference they didn't know when full service would be restored.

The previous update from Manconi was at 23:40, Thursday, when he said the damaged equipment had been removed from the train and they were about to start installing new equipment.

It still wasn't clear why the wire broke, said Rideau Transit Group chief executive officer Peter Lauch.

Nothing similar happened during the testing of the line prior to its launch last fall, he added.

OC Transpo Trains Damaged in Collision at Belfast Yard

Ottawa Ontario - Two trains will be temporarily out of service because they collided Friday at Belfast Yard, Rideau Transit Maintenance said Friday.

The maintenance group says the trains made "slight contact with one another" at a "slow speed" at the maintenance and storage yard located between Tremblay and St. Laurent stations on the Confederation Line.

"The side of one vehicle made light contact with a stationary vehicle on an adjacent track when passing it," an email from Rideau Transit Maintenance spokesperson Jodi Rogers said Friday evening.

"There was minor damage to the side panels on both vehicles, and the situation was quickly and safely brought under control."

Tory Charter, director of Ottawa's transit operations, told CBC in an email the city is aware of the incident.

A spokesperson for the city directed CBC to Rideau Transit Maintenance for more details.

The collision comes after the longest stretch of disrupted schedules for OC Transpo's new Confederation Line since it launched four months ago.

OC Transpo is currently facing a shortage of trains and running special supplementary buses between Tunney's Pasture and Hurdman stations to downtown in an effort to offset delays for passengers.

The special buses are scheduled to run until 31 Jan 2020.

The cost of the extra service is being charged to Rideau Transit Maintenance.

Rideau Transit Maintenance said it is investigating the cause of Friday's collision.

26/03/2020

Ottawa Citizen

Kingston (CN)

Prescott

Two trains full of military vehicles are expected to soon pull into Prescott, prompting the Canadian Army to issue a notice that the arrival of the equipment is part of the process in returning gear from a cancelled training exercise out West.

With its notice, the army is trying to head off conspiracy theorists who have tried to link the ongoing transportation of military equipment to claims the federal government is about to call in the Canadian Forces because of novel coronavirus.

"There is no cause for alarm (as) these movements by rail and the ensuing ground convoys from railheads to final destinations is how we normally move our vehicles over long distances for major exercises such as Ex Maple Resolve which as you know we recently decided to cancel," said army spokesman Lt.-Col. Doug MacNair.

Maple Resolve was scheduled to take place from May 11 to 24 in Wainwright, Alta., but was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The exercise normally involves about 5,000 personnel and 1,450 pieces of major equipment.

The equipment on the trains arriving in Prescott will be unloaded and transferred by road to Canadian Forces Base Petawawa.

Video of military vehicles being transported back by train from Maple Resolve made the rounds on social media on the weekend, prompting concerns from some that the Canadian Forces was mobilizing because of COVID-19.

Movement of U.S. army equipment by rail for exercises or transfer from factories to bases has also prompted concerns on social media that the American government is going to declare martial law.

MacNair said one of the trains with Maple Resolve equipment was to leave Wainwright on Wednesday for Prescott. The second will leave March 30. The trains are loaded with about 130 military trucks and armoured vehicles. Department of National Defence spokesman Dan Le Bouthillier said there has been instances of disinformation on social media involving the movement of military equipment in both Quebec and Ontario.

"The risks and impacts of misinformation during this critical period are real and need close and careful monitoring," he noted in a statement.

Le Bouthillier said the Canadian Forces and the DND are relying heavily on legitimate news organizations in reporting the facts.

The Canadian Forces could be eventually called upon by the federal government to provide support if the pandemic worsens.

"Should assistance from the Canadian Army be requested to support the COVID-19 outbreak, Canadians should rest assured that our help will be in the form that Canadians are used to when we assist authorities with natural disasters such as flood and fires, we will lend a helping hand," explained MacNair.

Like other organizations, the Canadian Forces has been taking measures to limit exposure of personnel to COVID-19.

Military training schools in Borden, Ont., and other locations are being closed.

The Canadian Forces also announced Tuesday that officer cadets at its universities in Kingston and Saint-Jean, Que., were being sent home. They will complete their studies online.

COVID-19 has also caused the cancellation or postponement of a number of naval exercises and operations. HMCS Glace Bay and HMCS Shawinigan, which were to take part in naval training off the coast of Africa, are now returning to Halifax. The ships are expected to arrive in mid-April.

HMCS Nanaimo and HMCS Whitehorse are cutting short their participation in U.S.-led counter-drug operations. The ships were originally set to return to Canada in mid-May but are now expected to arrive in early April.