

# Local Railway Items from Area Papers - Otrain

23/09/1999 Ottawa Citizen

Otrain

Light rail project gets green light

By Zev Singer

The train has now left the station, although not quite on schedule.

Yesterday, by a 12-6 margin, Regional Council gave the go-ahead for the light rail "pilot project" that will activate eight kilometres of existing railroad tracks as a public transitway, which will be operated by OC Transpo rather than CP Rail, as originally proposed.

The route, originally expected to be in service before the end of this year, is now set to be in place by the summer of 2001. The eight-kilometre stretch will run from Bayview, near Lebreton Flats, to the South Keys shopping centre.

Council approved one-time costs of \$16 million and operating costs of \$394,000 for each of the next two years. According to the report put before council, the region will save \$5.4 million in capital costs and \$1.2 million in annual operating costs by implementing the railway under the control of OC Transpo.

In a long and heated debate, councillors argued over the economics of the plan.

There was consensus among councillors that there is a great necessity to reduce traffic congestion in the city by getting people out of cars and into public transit, but opinion varied drastically on the cheapest way to make that happen.

Supporters of the plan, among them Regional Chair Bob Chiarelli, argue that using existing track is much cheaper than extending bus transit-ways, which costs \$12 million per kilometre.

The entire capital investment in the eight-kilometre light rail project, by comparison, Mr. Chiarelli said, is only \$16 million.

"Anyone who says that the capital cost is too high is just misinformed," he added. Mr. Chiarelli also argued that federal and provincial money will likely one day be given to light rail, and this plan gives the region a foot in the door.

Yet opponents of the plan, like Councillor Gord Hunter, believe that logic is misleading because the long-term cost of the light rail rests in extending and building further rail lines. "It's time to bail on the rail," he said.

While supporters of the plan say riders find trains more comfortable and attractive than buses, opponents of the light rail plan say that not enough new riders will be added to justify the trains.

Councillor Molly McGoldrick-Larsen, for example, argued that people will still drive their cars downtown from the suburbs because there are still too many areas that lack bus access, and therefore would lack access to the light rail train stations.

"If you've got a leak in the roof," she said, "are you going to build an extension on the house? This is going to be a disaster."

28/08/2001 Ottawa Citizen

Otrain

Safety Fears Delay Light Rail Project

Officials miss Sept. 4 start date; could be several weeks late

by Ken Gray

Safety violations have caused Ottawa's much-touted light-rail project to miss its Sept. 4 launch date.

Documents obtained by the Citizen show that in an incident on Aug. 21, the bucket of a back-hoe working along the tracks hit a rail, causing the signal to change from clear to stop.

This forced an approaching VIA Rail passenger train into an emergency stop.

Two other incidents - an unsecured piece of heavy equipment, and a mistake by a light-rail driver trainee - have caused railway safety inspectors to give OC Transpo until Sept. 14 to find solutions to these hazards.

No date has been given for the light-rail project to begin, but it is expected to be sometime in mid-September, perhaps even longer. Inaugural ceremonies have been cancelled.

The city's Web site was still announcing a Sept. 4 launch last night even though Mayor Bob Chiarelli is expected to make an announcement on the delay this morning.

The delay is a serious setback for the project that has been vital to Mr. Chiarelli's plan to deal with Ottawa's growth.

The problem also means that the line, running from Green-boro through Carleton University to LeBreton Flats, will miss the opening of the school year and the upswing of commuters returning from vacations.

It is the second delay for the \$24-million project, which was initially to begin sometime this month.

A letter from Rosemarie Leclair, the city's general manager of transportation, utilities and public works, to the mayor and councillors says, "staff is currently reviewing this matter in greater detail to assess all options, including deferral of the launch date.

"Work has yet to be completed on the track, resulting in the inability to proceed with operator training on the line within the timelines originally anticipated," said the letter.

"There have been a number of delays over the last few weeks, which have had a cumulative effect on the work plan, and compromise our ability to ensure that all outstanding items can be completed appropriately within the remaining time," wrote Ms. Leclair in the letter, dated yesterday.

Innes Councillor Rainer Bloess called the delay "unfortunate.

"The ideal situation would have been to have it up and running when school starts," Mr. Bloess said. However, "safety is the primary issue."

Cumberland Councillor Phil McNeely blamed the delays on the project's complexity.

"That's not easy to get going," Mr. McNeely said.

Alta Vista Councillor Peter Hume said the delay won't have much impact on Carleton students because they can find alternative travel for a few weeks. "This needs to be right from the beginning," Mr. Hume said. "If that means a short delay, so be it"

O-Train Moves at a crawl toward amid-October launch

By Carolynne Wheeler

Ottawa's long-delayed O-Train, now lurching towards a mid-October launch, has been delayed by outdated government rules and technical difficulties that will keep the train moving at a crawl for its first couple of months.

A memo from general manager Rosemarie Leclair to the mayor and councillors yesterday shows the official launch of the train is now being planned for the week of Oct. 15. Twelve of 28 OC Transpo drivers have finished their training, with the rest to finish by Oct. 12.

The bad news is, the train won't be able to pick up passengers every 15 minutes as first planned. The major delays encountered by the project are:

- Signalling and operations at two at-grade railway crossing "diamond" junctions, one at Walkley and one at Ellwood, were supposed to be transferred over to CP Rail from CN Rail, but that transfer has been delayed. The delay means they can't be fully automated, which slows running times.

- An order from the Board of Transport Commission dating to 1966 restricts speed between those two diamonds to 32 kilometres per hour. Until city staff gets the restriction removed, trains are forced to travel slowly through two kilometres one-quarter of the full track.

- The train's smaller wheels are being nicked and chipped by travelling with any speed over the diamonds, which are designed for heavier trains, to the dismay of Bombardier, the manufacturer that may have to accept the trains back at the end of a trial period. Right now, to avoid the nicks, trains must cross the diamonds at five kilometres per hour. Work is being done at the crossings to try to reduce the damage caused.

- All train stations are complete, except telephones and timetables, which will be installed next week. But the elevator at the Carling station is still being installed, and won't be done until the end of the month at which point it will have to undergo a provincial inspection before it can be used.

"The combination of things will lead to a longer running time on the train than we would have liked," said Helen Gault, OC Transpo's manager of transit planning and scheduling. "This is a freight line, which nobody has even worried about for years, which has been running one train a week.

"It's frustrating, but it is a pilot project. We're learning an awful lot as we go along."

The delays have not sat well with city councillors, who fear the project is running even further into the red.

"The more it's set back, the more we miss out on revenue and the more costly it becomes," said Cumberland Ward Councillor Phil Mc-Neely. "It's one of those things. It's a pilot project, I guess that's what they're stressing."

In August, staff warned councillors the project would be about \$2.4 million over its \$24-million budget. While the final costs aren't tallied, Ms. Leclair said yesterday she expects costs will still be within that budget.

Innes Ward Councillor Rain-er Bloess said he expects councillors will be kept abreast of any changes to that budget.

"My first reaction was, this is turning into a comedy of errors," he said. "I'm starting to wonder if this is really worth it."

13/10/2001 Ottawa Citizen Otrain

O-Train debut gets green light

By Tony Lofaro

The O-Train is smoothly rolling along toward its Monday (15/10) debut after a few false starts, OC Transpo officials said yesterday.

At a morning demonstration of the \$26.4-million light-rail project, the media, OC Transpo personnel and civic officials rode the diesel train on its eight-kilometre north-south route from the Greenboro station to the stop at Bayview Road, next to LeBreton Flats.

OC Transpo officials say problems over signalling and operations at-grade railway crossing "diamond" junctions, the train's wheels which were being chipped when going over the diamonds and the train's restricted travelling speeds have been corrected.

The three train stops are ready, except for an elevator at the Carling Avenue station, which is not completed.

The trains, which travel 60 kmh, can carry 135 seated passengers, plus 150 standing.

Serge Lavigne, project manager for light-rail, said the hard work to get the project off the ground has paid off.

"It's been a big challenge, even though it's not obvious to outsiders, because when you have a project that's five miles (eight kilometres) long, it's as complex as if it was 100 miles long."

The O-Train will run every 20 minutes on weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to midnight, 7 a.m. to midnight on Saturday and 8 a.m. to midnight on Sundays. Passengers can travel free until the end of the year.

15/10/2001 Ottawa Citizen Otrain

Future of O-Train 'a real gamble'

Expectations run high as train scheduled to pull out of station today

By Carolynne Wheeler and Mohammed Adam

When the O-Train pulls out of Bayview and Greenboro stations at 3 p.m. today, it will be a major milestone in the bus-or-train debate which has dogged city politicians for decades.

The project has been a steep learning curve for city officials, who for the first time were faced with issues of track ownership and signalling, driver training and strict Transport Canada regulations.

The project's original \$24 million budget now sits at \$26.4 million, and its original proposed launch of early August was delayed first to Sept. 4, when officials planned a major event at Carleton University during its frosh week, and then after invitations for the gala had gone out delayed again until Oct. 15.

This time, the launch is as certain as it can be, four years after regional council began to study the project and two years after they gave final approval.

"I know people are disappointed we are few weeks late. But it's a very fast track to implement," said Helen Gault, OC Transpo manager of transit planning and development.

"It's been an intense time but we've been moving methodically forward.

"Capital Ward Councillor Clive Doucet, a long time supporter of light-rail who is also vice chairman of the city's transportation and transit committee, is both tremendously excited and tremendously nervous. (Today), I think, marks the most important day in my career as a local politician. It's what I have struggled for, and my community has struggled for, for the last four years," he said.

Now, the future of light-rail in Ottawa rests on the success of three light diesel trains and an eight-kilometre track. And expectations are high. "It is scary. It's a real gamble," Mr. Doucet said. "I think the fear is we were unable to make it big enough to make a big impact. But we had no choice (financially).

"Thirty years ago, city politicians chose a bus-only Transit-way, rather than light rail, as the commuter transit of the future. But as the city expands, traffic jams at rush hour increase, and heavy snowfall just around the corner, light-rail has never looked more appealing.

"We built roads all over the place in the 1950s to give people freedom, but nobody at the time had ever heard of traffic jams," said David Jeanes, a Nortel engineer and light-rail expert for the national lobby group Transport 2000.

"We have hit a wall, and without massive cost and massive destruction (of homes and green space) road capacity in the city cannot be met. The time has come for light-rail."

This pilot project has a tough journey ahead. At its inception at the former regional council, it was praised by some as a promising first step.

Out of the Ottawa station

The O-Train is lots of fun, a railroad fan's dream of a commuter service for Ottawa. But it will take a good year or two to see whether this light-rail service is truly practical for our city.

The eight-kilometre rail service is being started this afternoon, after an official launch at 2 p.m. After so much time, money and political capital has been invested in this project, city officials are near ecstasy that the trains are actually running. The project was almost dealt a fatal setback when it was discovered that there was a Board of Transport Commission order limiting train speed to 32 kilometres an hour for two kilometres of track. Such a restriction might have forced the city to cut two kilometres off the route, or run a far less frequent service. Then late last week the 1966 order was rescinded and OC Transpo's Helen Gault called "Welcome aboard" to a small group of journalists on Friday, for a little test run at the train's main station at Carleton University. And the train was able to move along at a brisk 60 kilometres per hour, slowing to about 16 kilometres per hour when crossing two intersecting tracks.

The train is a pleasant change for commuters accustomed to smoke-belching old buses. It's sleek, with big windows and 135 comfortable seats. Service will be every 20 minutes. The ride is smooth and quiet, the views are pleasant. On Friday, as the train was heading south from Carleton on the bridge over the beautiful rapids of the Rideau River, the train's most fervent supporter on city council, Clive Doucet, insisted that the view will become known on films and television. Mr. Doucet's enthusiasm for the O-Train is shared by the Transpo staff who are on the project, including 28 drivers who have been trained to run the three trains. "It beats driving the bus. There's no traffic," said George Plunkett, a driver with 31 years of service with Transpo, just before he took the controls of the train Friday. "It is a lot of fun."

One of the remarkable things about this project is how Transpo staff have become its champions. A few years ago, Transpo wanted no part of rail experiments. Today, the company is counting on the pilot project to become permanent.

And if it doesn't happen? "We would be very disappointed. People have put their hearts into it," says Ms. Gault. "It's absolutely changed us."

In fact, there is so much enthusiasm for the O-Train that people at Transpo and on city council are talking about expanding the train system, with an east-west line and perhaps even transforming the transitway, our bus-only road system, into a tracked transit system for trains. But let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Let's not forget the O-Train is a pilot project that is to last two years. The project has had some unexpected glitches already. We don't know whether there will be problems with the trains in the harsh Ottawa winter. We don't really know how the train equipment will wear. And we certainly do not have a firm grasp on the cost of pushing ahead with a big rail-transit system. All we really know is that the trains make public transit fun. That's only a good start.

04/06/2002 *Ottawa Citizen**Otrain*

Two of three O-Trains sidelined after mishaps

Two incidents within 24 hours have left O-Train passengers with only one train to stand on.

The O-Train will be on a reduced schedule today arriving every 40 minutes instead of every 20 minutes because two of its three trains are out of commission.

On Sunday, a train returning to the Walkley Road maintenance yard ran over a rail switch that was in the wrong position, damaging its wheels.

Several parts must be inspected by a Montreal lab before the train can be used again.

Then yesterday morning, the substitute train's generator malfunctioned, shutting down all of its electronic systems.

"It's an unfortunate coincidence that hopefully will be reconciled quickly," said Helen Geult [sic], manager of transit, planning and development for the City of Ottawa.

The city has three O-Trains but uses only two at a time, rotating their use for maintenance purposes.

Both trains are expected to be repaired within the next two days.

15/08/2002 *Ottawa Citizen**Otrain*

NRC looks for ways to reduce stress on O-Train wheels

By David Reevley

The National Research Council is trying to find a way for O-Trains to cross two heavy-rail tracks without suffering impacts so severe that their undercarriages are damaged, according to the manager of the light-rail pilot project.

Studying how to "reprofile" the crossings near the south end of the light-rail line will cost taxpayers \$60,000, Mario Peloquin said.

"We would hope to be able to make the Walkley crossing at 20 miles per hour and the Ell-wood crossing at 30 miles per hour," Mr. Peloquin said.

Now, he said, the O-Train can only cross the other tracks at 15 and five miles per hour, respectively. "

The trains lose a significant amount of time in the deceleration," he said.

The metal of the city's three light trains' wheels is being "marked" by the impact with the heavy-rail tracks as the trains make the crossings dozens of times a day.

"

There is no cracking in the steel, I want to make that clear, and there is no pitting," Mr. Peloquin said.

Nevertheless, he said the marks show the wheel-on-track impact is significant, and the resulting vibrations could damage the wheel assemblies or the joints between those assemblies and the trains themselves.

"Those are in a difficult to reach part of the trains, so it's quite difficult to do maintenance," Mr. Peloquin said. Accordingly, NRC experts will try rebuilding the "diamonds" where the tracks cross and will study whether the new design reduces the stress on the train wheels.

He said OC Transpo hopes the work will be finished by mid-September.

Ottawa close to funding deal on north-south railway line.

By Ken Gray.

Federal and city officials have been meeting for the last month trying to hammer out funding for a \$700-million north-south light-rail system for Ottawa. "We expect a positive response," said Mayor Bob Chiarelli yesterday of the negotiation between city staff and members of Industry Minister Allan Rock's department. There is a "strong willingness" by the federal government to contribute to transit in Ottawa, the mayor said.

He expects federal money to be ready "almost immediately," though he declined to estimate an amount. "I don't want to negotiate publicly," Mr. Chiarelli said. The north-south system, slated to be built between 2006 and 2008, would extend from Limebank and Armstrong roads southwest of Ottawa airport, running south of the airport and joining the current O-Train route to Bayview. It would then loop into downtown along either Sparks or Queen streets, said Ned Lathrop, the city's manager of development services. There are negotiations about an airport stop, Mr. Lathrop said.

The current heavy diesel O-Train would be discontinued and likely will be replaced by light electric rail, Mr. Chiarelli said.

"Ninety per cent of road bed modification used for the O-Train could be adapted to the new system, Mr. Lathrop said.

Concurrently with the city-federal talks, the municipalities of Gatineau and Ottawa and the National Capital Commission have been holding separate meetings to discuss a cross-border light-rail link and rapid-bus routes between the two cities.

Those talks have included discussions about the type of rail vehicles to be used and the possibility of an extension of light rail from Bayview across the Prince of Wales Bridge and into downtown Gatineau.

The north-south route is the first phase of a \$3-billion 20-year rapid-transit plan that would link most areas of the city to light-rail or rapid-bus service.

Mr. Chiarelli could not say how much money will come out of the discussions, but the city already spends about \$100 million a year on transit infrastructure and needs about \$150 million annually to proceed with rapid-transit expansion. The city also hopes to tap into provincial infrastructure money and public-private partnerships, the mayor said.

"We've been spending hundreds of millions of dollars already," he said, citing the new Bayshore transitway station, an expanded Billings-Bridge station, new park-and-rides and bus lanes on Woodroffe Avenue.

The city has invested about \$1 billion in the Transitway and transit over the last 22 years, Mr. Chiarelli said.

Spending in the first few years of light-rail might be low as environmental assessments, design work and shopping for vehicles must occur, Mr. Chiarelli said. In those years, higher funding could go to bus-related transit, the mayor said, but as time goes on money would shift to light rail once vehicle purchases and roadbed building occurs.

"We're still looking for the funding recipe," the mayor said. In addition to the stimulus created by construction of the line, Mr. Lathrop said there will be intensification of development at stations along the line that should be good for the area economy.

The Bayview station would see the light-rail line and the transitway intersect and that would create revitalization in that under-developed area, Mr. Lathrop said.

The proposed Ottawa central library has been touted for the Bayview-LeBreton Flats and the new war museum is already under construction there.

"I think you will see LeBreton Flats benefitting from it and Sparks Street benefitting from it if that route is chosen," Mr. Lathrop said.

The light-rail line through downtown would help tourists visit the Parliament Buildings and other national attractions, Mr. Lathrop said.

"Tourism is a critical issue," he said.

On Thursday, David Jeanes, the president of Transport 2000, expressed concern that reconstruction of the O-Train line could cause a two-year disruption in service to Carleton University.

Mr. Lathrop acknowledged there would be a disruption but doubted it would be two years.

"I hope not," he said.

Gatineau should develop its own O-Train service now that the City of Ottawa has offered to buy the Prince of Wales Bridge, a group of urban transit promoters said yesterday.

Pierre Laliberte, a spokesman for the Coalition pour l'amélioration du transport urbain (the Coalition for the Improvement of Urban Transport), said Gatineau could have an O-Train system linking the Aylmer and Hull sectors to Ottawa at Bayview station for \$75.3 million.

The light-rail service is intended to complement Gatineau's proposed Rapibus transitway, which would run parallel to part of the rail line at a cost of about \$150 million.

O-Train supporters say the trains use one-third as much diesel fuel as articulated buses and would make Ottawa-Gatineau trips faster than by car or bus because they would use a different bridge and a separate right-of-way.

The City of Ottawa has agreed to purchase a 13-kilometre stretch of railway tracks owned by CP Rail and the Prince of Wales train bridge for \$12.6 million. The acquisition paves the way for O-Train service to the Ottawa suburb of Barrhaven.

Ottawa Mayor Bob Chiarelli said construction of a Barrhaven line to the VIA Rail station and OC Transpo bus terminal at Woodroffe Avenue and Fallow-field Road is to begin in 2006.

If built, the proposed 5.5-kilometre line from Bayview to the Casino du Lac-Leamy would run mainly along existing track and cost about \$18.2 million.

A 14-kilometre Hull-Aylmer line would require new track along a former CP Rail corridor beside the bicycle path along Lucerne Boulevard. The Hull-Aylmer line would cost about \$63.2-million. Trains along both lines would run every 15 minutes, carrying up to 1,150 people an hour.

Light-rail supporters say the system would provide rapid transit service to Ottawa without the need to transfer and would reduce congestion on inter-provincial bridges.

Mr. Laliberte said Ottawa's decision to buy the Prince of Wales Bridge will help Gatineau develop a solid urban transit system.

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.

The O-Train is not in service while police are on the scene.

Ottawa police and the Transportation Safety Board of Canada are investigating after an O-Train struck and killed a person who was on the tracks.

The rail accident happened around 7:20 p.m.

Ottawa paramedics referred inquiries to police.

Police said they were in the very early stages of the investigation but are saying they had no reason to suspect foul play.

The Transportation Safety Board is an independent agency that investigates marine, pipeline, railway and aviation transportation incidents.

All O-Train light rail transit service was suspended on Wednesday evening, with operators hoping to resume service by Thursday morning.

O-Train upgrade targeted for late-February completion

The completion of the long-awaited upgrade to the O-Train system is still more than a month away, a city official said Wednesday.

The \$60-million project, which council approved in June 2011, was supposed to be finished by last September, but delays have now pushed that date into late February.

The current goal is to begin offering the expanded service on Feb. 21.

However, if you're marking your calendar, it might be wise to use pencil.

"There are unexpected circumstances that we can come across and there may be something that comes up that impacts our schedule," said Richard Holder, a manager in the city's rail implementation office, which is overseeing the project.

Snow and cold make this a challenging time of year to implement a new system and provide a 100 per cent guarantee on a delivery date, he said. "We're doing our best to meet a plan."

In the meantime, testing and tinkering continues.

Workers this week were completing some track work and making a few minor modifications to the track-and-signalling system based on the results of testing conducted before Christmas.

Part of the delay is because half way through 2014, the signalling system the city was planning to use had to change due to new federal protocols.

Starting Sunday, mock service using the new trains will begin overnight. Holder said this is called "systems acceptance testing". Essentially, it's to make sure everything works together and the various systems are talking to each other properly.

The mock service will operate several nights a week for four weeks, between 10:30 or 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.

There will, of course, be no passengers on board, as drivers familiarize themselves with the new trains and with having four trains on the line at a time.

For rail buffs, this will be the first chance to see the city's new Alstom Lint trains in action.

If everything goes as planned, at the end of the four weeks, O-Train service will be shut down for six days for final operator training and to fully complete the switch from the old system to new by making physical changes to the platforms and signage at stations.

"Once those changes have been made, that's when we can start the full service," Holder said.

The shutdown is currently scheduled to begin on Feb. 14. That timing coincides Carleton University's reading week, so ridership demand would likely be lower that week.

As it has during previous shutdowns, OC Transpo will operate a parallel bus service along the O-Train route. The city will also keep that service in place for the first week of operation under the upgraded system, in case any problems arise, Holder said.

Once completed, the upgraded O-Train service will run approximately every nine minutes at most times of the day and every 15 minutes late in the evening and on Sundays between Bayview and Greenboro stations.

O-Train service continued to be suspended Tuesday, a day after a minor derailment near Carleton University involving a northbound train.

Paramedics confirmed they responded just before 3:30 p.m. on Monday to an incident near the university's O-Train stop.

OC Transpo alerted commuters via Twitter that O-Train service was being replaced by Route 107, running every 15 minutes between Greenboro and Bayview stations.

When the train was evacuated following the derailment on Monday, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back.

She was taken to hospital as a precaution, paramedics said. No other injuries were reported.

Police were also on scene. OC Transpo security were investigating the cause of the derailment, police said.

There were signal issues with the train at about 2:30 p.m., according to a customer service representative at OC Transpo, but those may have been unrelated to the service interruption.

Commuters were told they could take bus route 107, running between Bayview and Greenboro stations every 15 minutes, on Monday afternoon.

OC Transpo said that Otrain service would be suspended for the rest of the day Monday. It did not confirm when service would resume.

Woman hurt as O-Train derails near Carleton University

O-Train service was suspended Monday after a minor derailment just before 3:30 p.m. near Carleton University, involving a northbound train. A female passenger in her 50s suffered from a sore neck and back after the crash and was taken to hospital as a precaution, paramedics said,

O-Train derailment a mystery

Investigation is continuing

MICHAEL WOODS OTTAWA CITIZEN

The cause of Monday's minor O-Train derailment near Carleton University remained unknown on Tuesday, even as full service resumed in the morning.

O-Train service resumed at about 8:45 a.m., a day after the minor derailment involving a northbound train near the university's station.

A city spokesperson said on Tuesday that it would be "premature" to discuss possible causes of the derailment, because the cause remained under investigation.

It was unclear how long the investigation will take.

Transit staff worked through Monday night and early Tuesday to rerail the train, move it to Walkley Yard and conduct inspections and repairs to the track, the city's manager of transit operations Troy Charter said via email.

When the train was evacuated after the derailment, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back.

She was taken to hospital as a precaution, paramedics said. No other injuries were reported.

With files from Marie-Danielle Smith

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Derailement blamed on human error and bad switch

MATTHEW PEARSON ;OTTAWA CITIZEN

The city is blaming the recent O-Train derailment on human error and a spring switch that didn't close properly

On Aug. 11, just after 3 p.m., the O-Train travelling north toward Bayview station experienced a partial derailment as it approached Carleton station.

When the train was evacuated after the derailment, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back. She was taken to hospital as a precaution.

No other injuries were reported. The O-Train returned to regular service at 8:45 a.m. the next day, once the necessary repairs and inspections were conducted to the track and signal infrastructure to ensure that train service could safely return to regular operation.

In an interview Friday, OC Transpo general manager John Manconi said there's been no issue with the switch since the incident.

"It's functioning perfectly now," he said.

An investigation has revealed that a spring switch, which is a piece of rail infrastructure that moves to direct a train from one track to another, remained slightly open, causing the train's second and third wheel sets to derail.

The train was travelling at approximately 20 km/h at the time.

"The investigation indicates that the spring switch did not properly close when a previous southbound trip travelled over it, resulting in a piece of the spring switch to become dislodged, resulting in the switch remaining in an open position," Manconi said.

There was also a human factor at play. The operator failed to exit the train and physically inspect the track switch to ensure full alignment of the track after noting a signal light irregularity.

The operator contacted the rail traffic control centre and confirmed that the signal irregularity was not due to another vehicle being in the section of the track.

The operator reduced the travelling speed in accordance with the rules.

When signal irregularities arise, operators are trained to follow Canadian Rail Operating Rules, which include exiting the train to conduct an inspection.

"This procedure was not followed in relation to this occurrence. Transit Services Department has taken the appropriate internal action to ensure adherence to operating procedures," Manconi said.

The operator is on "investigatory leave," which means they continue to be paid.

"We take appropriate action once we have all the facts and information before us," Manconi told the Citizen.

Derailement blamed on human error and bad switch

The city is blaming the recent O-Train derailment on human error and a spring switch that didn't close properly.

On Aug. 11, just after 3 p.m., the O-Train travelling north toward Bayview station experienced a partial derailment as it approached Carleton station.

When the train was evacuated after the derailment, a woman in her 50s requested assistance because she was suffering from a sore neck and back. She was taken to hospital as a precaution. No other injuries were reported. The O-Train returned to regular service at 8:45 a.m. the next day, once the necessary repairs and inspections were conducted to the track and signal infrastructure to ensure that train service could safely return to regular operation.

In an interview Friday, OC Transpo general manager John Manconi said there's been no issue with the switch since the incident.

"It's functioning perfectly now," he said.

An investigation has revealed that a spring switch, which is a piece of rail infrastructure that moves to direct a train from one track to another, remained slightly open, causing the train's second and third wheel sets to derail.

The train was travelling at approximately 20 km/h at the time.

"The investigation indicates that the spring switch did not properly close when a previous southbound trip travelled over it, resulting in a piece of the spring switch to become dislodged, resulting in the switch remaining in an open position," Manconi said.

There was also a human factor at play. The operator failed to exit the train and physically inspect the track switch to ensure full alignment of the track after noting a signal light irregularity.

The operator contacted the rail traffic control centre and confirmed that the signal irregularity was not due to another vehicle being in the section of the track.

The operator reduced the travelling speed in accordance with the rules.

When signal irregularities arise, operators are trained to follow Canadian Rail Operating Rules, which include exiting the train to conduct an inspection.

"This procedure was not followed in relation to this occurrence. Transit Services Department has taken the appropriate internal action to ensure adherence to operating procedures," Manconi said.

The operator is on "investigatory leave," which means they continue to be paid.

"We take appropriate action once we have all the facts and information before us," Manconi told the Citizen.

O-Train pitched as name for rail system.

London calls it the "Underground," Montreal calls it the "Métro" and Vancouver calls it the "SkyTrain."

Now Ottawa may soon adopt the name O-Train for its entire innercity rail network.

O-Train was first selected by city staff in 2001 as the name of Ottawa's north-south line between Bayview and Greenboro stations.

Council later adopted the name "Confederation Line" for the new east-west light rail line between Blair and Tunney's Pasture stations during the construction phase, but said at the time that OC Transpo and the transit commission would determine a formal name at a future date. It appears that time has come. The transit commission next week will be asked to endorse a plan that sees the entire network called O-Train, with the east-west line to remain as the Confederation Line and the north-south line to henceforth be called Trillium Line.

If the commission agrees, city council will have the final say.

Staff recommended the name Trillium Line because it is easily read, pronounced and understood in both English and French, and because it makes an indirect reference to Ontario's provincial government (the trillium is Ontario's official flower and is also found in the Ottawa area).

The name Confederation Line was chosen because its alignment and one downtown station bring it close to Parliament Hill, and because the 13 stations across the city mirror Canada's own development as a nation through the federal government's investment in national railways. The name is also easily read, pronounced and understood in both English and French.

The transit commission is also expected to discuss a report on the ongoing O-Train expansion project.

The expanded service was originally due to be completed by fall 2014, but the report contains no official launch date.

A staff report says the city still needs to build the Sawmill Private noise barrier and complete the testing and commissioning of the line before the new expanded service can be put into operation.

The city is also anticipating a sixday shutdown in order to facilitate the switchover from the existing system to the new one.

The expansion includes the addition of two sidings, which are short sections of parallel track where trains in opposite directions can meet and pass each other, and the purchase of six new trains.

Once complete, the north-south line will accommodate 1,900 passengers per hour per direction, compared to 1,100 currently.

'O-Train' may soon refer to future lines

On Wednesday the transit commission endorsed using O-Train to refer to both the existing north-south line between Bayview and Greenboro stations, and the future east-west light-rail transit system, between Blair and Tunney's Pasture. The east-west line will still individually called the Confederation Line. The north-south line, which has been known as the O-Train since it opened in 2001, will be known as the Trillium Line. Together, they'll be called the O-Train. There will also be numbers and colours to brand the different lines, to help people navigate them. Confederation is expected to be known as Line 1 and use red as a colour, while Trillium will be Line 2 and use green, according to a presentation given to the commission. "People adapt. They'll use numbering or the colouring, whatever they feel comfortable with," said transit general manager John Manconi.

Two men arrested in bloody knife fight

Carleton student sees clash from seat on O-Train

Two men were arrested after a bloody knife fight at Carleton University on Thursday.

Police said they were called to the school around 11:30 a.m. after receiving a report of an assault near the O-Train.

Jordan Howran, a Peterborough native majoring in history at Carleton University, said he was sitting on the O-Train when he saw a fight break out.

"I'm from a small town, so I don't usually see that stuff, especially at 12 in the afternoon," he said. "Crazy."

Howran said a heavy-set man pulled a small knife on a thin man and stabbed his arm. When the stabbing victim turned the knife on his attacker, the heavy-set man was then stabbed in the hand as he held onto the knife.

The heavy-set man ran to the OTrain with the knife and boarded in an attempt to escape the other suspect.

"He's standing in the doorway claiming that the other guy has the knife," Howran said.

However, Howran said the heavy-set man hid the knife in the front pouch of his hoodie just before the thin man boarded the train and stood in the doorway so the door wouldn't close.

Howran said people were yelling at the two men to get off the train.

"There was blood everywhere," Howran said.

When police arrived at the station, the thin man started to run away.

Howran said. "Police tackled him."

Police said both men suffered minor injuries.

One of the men was carrying a backpack. Carleton wouldn't confirm whether the two are students.

O-Train plan to include airport link

Extension's new spur comes with environmental assessment study

A rail link to Ottawa's international airport, once dismissed by city officials, might be in the cards after all.

As part of its ongoing environmental assessment (EA) study on plans to extend O-Train service from Greenboro Station to Riverside South, the city is expected to unveil next week a preferred option that includes a new spur to the Macdonald-Cartier International Airport and the EY Centre.

"What we're doing here is we're getting the EA approval for that, but the decision as to when we're actually going to build it and implement it is a separate item," said Colin Simpson, city senior project manager of transportation planning.

Extending the O-Train's Trillium Line is part of the ambitious second phase of light rail construction " a \$3-billion plan that would also see service extended east, west and south to Place d'Orléans, Bayshore Shopping Centre and Algonquin College by 2023.

It's unclear just how much the airport link would cost, Simpson said. The estimated price tag of the O-Train extension from Greenboro to Bowesville Road in Riverside South is about \$100 million.

An earlier incarnation of the plan had the airport spur travelling south of Alert Road, near the Hilton Gardens Hotel, but Simpson said the proposed alignment has now changed to travel north of the EY Centre, which would also be served by a station.

The preferred station location at the airport is between the terminal building and the parking garage.

"It would come around on a big sweeping curve on an elevated platform, and it would rise up to the third floor of the parking garage," Simpson said.

Ottawa International Airport Authority welcomed the development. "We're obviously very much in support of a link to the airport," said vice-president Krista Kealey.

Without knowing the estimated cost of the spur, Kealey said, it was premature to discuss what, if any, contribution the airport authority would make.

"We're looking forward to moving the project forward and being there with them," she said.

The proposed plan envisions what Simpson called a dual overlay, " which means service would be provided to meet the demands at a given time.

"During peak hours, trains would primarily serve Riverside South with every second or third train going to the airport; during off-peak hours, such as during the day and in the evening, that would be flipped, so most of the trains would go to the airport and fewer trains would go to Riverside South," he said.

That the city's transportation planners are including a spur to the airport as part of the preferred option is a noteworthy development.

A 2013 report had ruled out such a spur and instead called for upgraded service on the 97 bus.

But that didn't sit well with airport management, and by the end of November, a compromise to include exploring a link to the airport as part of the EA was reached.

This is one of three environmental assessments being undertaken as part of Phase 2, which could add as many as 19 new stations and 35 kilometres to the LRT network.

The study area includes the existing Trillium Line corridor, between Bayview and Greenboro stations, the Walkley Yard maintenance and storage facility, and the proposed southern extension.

The feasibility of new stations at Gladstone Avenue (north side) and Walkley Road (south side) are also part of the current study.

Residents can learn more at two open houses next week; the first is at the Jim Durrell Recreation Centre, 1265 Walkley Rd., on Jan. 13 from 6 to 8 p.m. (OC Transpo routes 1, 8, 41, 87, 114, 144 and 146); the second is Jan. 15 at St. Anthony's Banquet Hall, 423 St. Anthony St., from 6 to 8 p.m. (OC Transpo routes 14, 85 and the O-Train).

The finalized staff recommendations for the O-Train extension will be presented to the transportation committee in Jun

The future of Ottawa's transportation system was unveiled Thursday at a splashy event at Lansdowne Park. The Citizen's Matthew Pearson was there to record people's impressions.

Two dozen politicians from three levels of government, senior city officials, rail executives, schoolchildren and the media were all on hand when a curtain dropped inside the Aberdeen Pavilion to reveal a full-sized Alstom Citadis Spirit light-rail car - the same vehicle that will be used on the Confederation Line once it's fully operational in 2018.

"It's now starting to feel real that we're going to get light rail in this city," Mayor Jim Watson excitedly told reporters after climbing into the rail car following the formal program.

#### SEE FOR YOURSELF

Starting Friday, the vehicle will be on public display in the Aberdeen Pavilion seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., until the end of March.

After that, it will be moved to OC Transpo headquarters on St. Laurent Road for driver training.

But Watson said he's keen to get the car out to another location in the city, such as a shopping centre. "The more people that see this train, the more they come away pretty impressed with what this project is all about," he said.

The featured car is a mockup that measures 17 metres in length, including the control room where drivers will sit.

The actual train is 48 metres long and can accommodate 300 passengers.

#### RIDER EXPERIENCE

The Alstom train is designed for passengers, said the senior vice-president of the company's North American operation. That means it's fully accessible, has big windows, and doesn't vibrate or make a lot of noise.

"You feel like you're in your living room," said Jérôme Wallut. "It's quite comfortable."

The display has a distinct newcar smell and the look and feel of other OC Transpo vehicles, including royal-blue seats and yellow grip poles.

#### IN GOOD COMPANY

In addition to the numerous European cities with similar models of Alstom trains, the company also has rail projects in a number of great North American cities, including Washington, D.C., Seattle, Miami and our neighbour to the east, Montreal.

#### WHAT CHIARELLI SAID

If history had played out differently, Ottawa could have celebrated this milestone years ago.

But Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli "the former mayor, whose 2006 plan for north-south light rail was scrapped not long after he lost that year's municipal election to Larry O'Brien" didn't want to talk about that on Thursday.

"I don't want to rehash history. This is where we are today," he said, noting it was an exciting moment for Watson, city council and senior officials, such as city manager Kent Kirkpatrick.

"This is a real feather in their cap."

#### WHAT ABOUT PHASE 2?

With a tangible train car now on display, attention turned to funding for the second phase of light rail, a \$3-billion plan that would extend the system farther east, west and south.

"I never miss a chance to talk about that," Watson said, noting the formal funding request will likely be made later this year.

The province has already committed to helping and the federal government will make its decision in the same spirit it did the earlier contribution, said Ottawa-Orléans MP Royal Galipeau.

"We're now in 2015. The decision we made for Phase 1 was made five years ago, in completely different circumstances," he said.

"But the spirit has not changed."

#### Expanded O-Train Service to Begin on Monday

Ottawa Ontario - O-Train riders should spend less time waiting for their train next week after service is expanded on Monday.

OC Transpo will put four of its new trains to work on the O-Train line, and begin servicing stations more frequently, OC Transpo said in a news release.

The O-Train line will be shut down on the weekend to implement the expanded service.

Bus Route 107 will service the route instead, running every 15 minutes on Saturday, and every 15 to 30 minutes on Sunday, the release said.

Starting Monday, O-Train will service stations every 10 to 12 minutes during weekdays and Saturdays, and every 10 to 15 minutes on Sundays.

The O-Train service currently operates two trains on the line that arrive at stations every 15 minutes.

OC Transpo expects the new Alstom Coradia Lint trains to reduce travel times on the line, and to service stations even faster, as often as every eight to 10 minutes, as signals and operations are adjusted to optimize service, the release said.

O-Train service will also begin at 06:00 on weekdays, half an hour earlier than before.



Switch glitch mars launch of added O-Train service

Commuters on the O-Train were left fuming Monday morning after a glitch halted the expanded service in its tracks - in front of the media who had gathered for the launch - leaving a red-faced Transit Commission chairman to apologize to stranded riders.

Transit Commission chairman Stephen Blais's arrival at the Carleton University O-Train station was delayed after he opened the expanded service at the Greenboro station.

Blais spent part of his morning at Greenboro station apologizing to riders for the delay after a switch malfunction halted service on the day city staff launched expanded service on the Trillium line.

"Just like when you buy a brand new house, you move in, you expect everything to be perfect and every once and a while there's a couple things that aren't exactly the way they are supposed to be," Blais said. "Our staff fixed them very quickly."

The city had planned to launch the event with fanfare, inviting reporters to a 9:30 a.m. briefing at Carleton University.

Blais and OC Transpo general manager John Manconi, who were both stuck at Greenboro, arrived an hour late to the event with dozens of furious commuters. Some of the O-Train riders had been delayed as long as an hour as a result of a switch malfunction at the south end of the passing track at the Carleton University station.

"Obviously when we have errors in that system, we want to be 100-per-cent sure that we're not going to have a collision," Blais said.

Mayor Jim Watson was scheduled to attend the launch, but was absent; he was recovering from the pelvic injury he suffered in a snowmobiling mishap on Saturday.

Watson said in a statement sent out after the train was back up and running that Monday marked a milestone in Ottawa's transit history.

"The completion of the O-Train Trillium Line Expansion project demonstrates our city's continued commitment to providing safe, reliable and efficient transit service," Watson said in the statement.

For Lisa Ducharme, the service wasn't so reliable. She said she wasn't sure she would take the train for her commute home.

"On a Monday morning, to have this much of a mess going on, that's just extremely disappointing, especially when we see all the reporters and cameras," Ducharme said. "It was extremely frustrating."

Commuter Sheila Darlaston said it took her 30 minutes to get from the Greenboro station to Carleton University before she was transferred to a bus.

Darlaston said the O-Train glitch on the city's launch day was "embarrassing" and "ridiculous."

"The service still sucks. We've spent all this money, all this taxpayer money on more crappy service," Darlaston said. "I don't think we are any further ahead, really."

Krishna Madaparathi, a deaf passenger who was stuck on an O-Train, said he looked at the OC Transpo Twitter account to find out what was happening when the train stopped, but it hadn't been updated.

"I had no idea what was going on while we were waiting," he wrote. "I don't know if there was an announcement."

Madaparathi said he followed other passengers off the train at Carleton University and onto a bus that took him to work at Tunney's Pasture.

Veronica Green, a master's of journalism student, said there was an air of excitement at the Bayview O-Train station. OC Transpo employees handed out flyers about the improved Trillium line.

The excitement was dampened, Green said, when passengers had to wait on the train for 20 minutes before it began to move. After a second 20-minute delay, the train arrived at Carleton University shortly before 9 a.m.

"It was a very packed O-Train of grumpy people," Green said. "As soon as the announcer comes on and there's a bit of a crackle on the speaker, so many groans. People know what's coming."

The first day of the improved service began earlier in the morning without a hitch. Manconi said he received nothing but positive feedback from riders before the glitch shut down O-Train service.

"Up until then, service was very good and we heard lots of positive comments," Manconi said. "Can we do better? Absolutely. We will be better."

Monday was the first day for an enhanced service that is meant to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times on Monday to Saturday and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

An "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations stopped O-Train service in its tracks Tuesday, forcing thousands of morning commuters onto the replacement 107 bus service along the north-south corridor.

Crews are working to diagnose the problem immediately and fix it, but city transit commission chairman Stephen Blais said there was no indication when the problem would be fixed.

It's the second day in a row that a mechanical failure has caused problems on the rail line, leaving city officials red-faced.

On Monday, the city had planned to launch expanded O-Train service with fanfare, inviting reporters to a 9:30 a.m. briefing at Carleton University.

But a switching malfunction caused an hour-long delay. Later in the day, the service was operating as planned.

"It's certainly been a frustrating few days," transit commission chairman Stephen Blais told CBC Radio Tuesday.

He apologized to OC Transpo customers and, in particular, riders of the O-Train.

The \$60-million upgrade, which was months behind schedule, is intended to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times Monday to Saturday and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

Blais said crews discovered Tuesday that there's an "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations that was installed as part of the expansion.

Apparently, it's sending a signal back to the trainyard to indicate that there is a problem on the track, which is prompting drivers not to proceed.

The signals are crucial to the system because the majority of the Trillium Line runs on a single track and then at three locations it splits to two tracks so the trains can pass. The signal is meant as safety feature to indicate there's a problem on the track and the train shouldn't proceed.

"Obviously we take safety and security very seriously, we don't want to have train collisions, so the operators were obeying the signal they were receiving, the red light," Blais said.

The issue on Monday and Tuesday are "very unfortunate coincidences" but not directly related, Blais said. A mechanical failure at the older switch at Carleton University was the cause of Monday's delay.

"We're going to get to the bottom of this issue and make sure we have everything fixed and ready to go as soon as we can," he said.

"We had hoped that things would work perfectly on Day One, but obviously there were some hiccups."

With files from Emma Loop

O-Train shut down after botched launch

Just call it the No-Train.

A day after the botched launch of the highly anticipated O-Train expansion, the service was shut down indefinitely Tuesday due to an "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations.

Replacement buses were brought in to deliver morning commuters, while crews tried to diagnose the problem. Trains were being run through the night Tuesday to test the system.

The incident left Ottawa officials red-faced for the second day in a row.

On Monday, a mechanical failure caused an hour-long delay on the rail line, just as the city was trying to launch the expanded service with some fanfare, having invited media to a 9:30 a.m. briefing at Carleton University.

On Tuesday, drivers didn't even get the trains out of the yard before the troubles set in.

"This is certainly a frustrating experience for everyone, especially for those who use the O-Train and particularly those who got stuck yesterday unaware of the difficulties, and may have been late for work or school or other commitments they had," transit commission chairman Stephen Blais told the Citizen. For riders and residents, however "whose fares and property taxes fund OC Transpo" it's actually been a frustrating few years. Consider:

A 53-day transit strike in the dead of winter, 2008-09;

A so-called "route optimization" plan designed to save \$22 million that saw rerouting, merging of routes and cancelling of neighbourhood bus runs in off-peak hours, 2011;

A multitude of delays, issues and bugs with the introduction of the Presto tap-and-go pay system, 2012-13;

An issue with new double-decker buses that saw exhaust vented into the cabins, making at least one driver so sick he had to be hospitalized, 2012; and

A \$60-million O-Train expansion project, which was approved in June 2011 and was to be completed last September, but remains mired in trouble.

Yet next Wednesday, council is poised to approve an average fare increase of 2.5 per cent. If approved, the measure would see the single cash fare exceed \$3.50 as of July 1.

It's all fed criticism of OC Transpo services from those who say they are too expensive, too unreliable and too frustrating to bother with.

And, behind the latest problem, looms another question from the critics: If the city can't get the OTrain to work, how can residents have confidence that the \$2.1-billion Confederation Line will work once it opens in 2018?

"That is a discussion that, I can assure you, we have already begun to have," Blais said Tuesday. "Certainly as we progress with finding and fixing the problem on Trillium Line, it will be OC Transpo's job and the city's job to regain confidence of our ridership."

Blais defended the city's system, calling it a "model for transit services in North America."

The O-Train upgrade was intended to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times Monday to Saturday, and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

Blais said crews discovered Tuesday that there was an "electronic problem" at one of the new switching stations that was installed as part of the expansion. It's sending a signal back to the train yard to indicate there is a problem on the track, which is prompting drivers not to proceed.

The signals are crucial to the system because the majority of the Trillium Line runs on a single track. At three locations, it splits into two tracks so trains can pass. The signal is meant as safety feature to indicate there's a problem on the track and that a train shouldn't go any farther.

"All those passes have to work all at the same time for the four trains to continue on their way and make sure we avoid a collision," Blais said, adding that safety

and security are the city's highest priority.

The issues Monday and Tuesday are "very unfortunate coincidences" but not directly related, Blais said.

A mechanical failure at the older switch at Carleton University was the cause of Monday's delay and it was repaired by RailTerm, the company contracted to perform maintenance and repairs on the O-Train track.

In a statement issued late Tuesday, OC Transpo general manager John Manconi said crews have actually identified two signal interruption issues. The first is due to an isolation joint used to separate different train signals. Eighteen locations exist on the new passing tracks and each one is being inspected and repaired as needed, Manconi said.

The second issue is still under investigation. The approximate location has been identified, but the root cause is unknown. The problem could be anything from a faulty wire to a connection, and the work involves physical inspection to identify, locate and resolve the problems, the city said.

Staff and contractors are "working around the clock on these issues," Manconi said.

OC Transpo will issue a progress report on Wednesday afternoon.

All of this comes after weeks of testing and tinkering on the new system.

In January, the city completed some track work and made a few minor modifications to the track-and-signalling system based on the results of tests before Christmas.

Then, it began operating a mock service overnight, several nights a week, for four weeks, to help drivers familiarize themselves with the new trains and with having four trains on the line at a time, instead of two.

That was followed by a complete shutdown for six days for final operator training and to fully complete the switch from the old system to the new by making physical changes to the platforms and signage at stations.

"We had hoped that things would work perfectly on Day 1, but obviously there were some hiccups," Blais said.

All aboard: O-Trains running again

'You learn from your mistakes,' transit manager says after two glitchy days

After a long night of testing and troubleshooting, O-Train service was back up and running again Wednesday afternoon.

And transit services general manager John Manconi pledged to OC Transpo customers that it's here to stay now that the kinks have been worked out.

This is the latest twist in the launch of the highly anticipated O-Train expansion - which has not gone well so far.

A mechanical failure on Monday fouled up plans for a media event and delayed morning commuters for at least an hour. Trains did operate normally later in the day.

Then on Tuesday, a pair of issues forced OC Transpo to shut down the service and call in replacement 107 buses to deliver passengers along the north-south corridor.

Manconi admitted to reporters at a media briefing at city hall that things haven't gone smoothly, and he apologized to riders.

But he also defended OC Transpo, saying complaints and concerns are seen by his organization as an opportunity for continuous improvement.

"You learn and grow from your mistakes and issues and I believe what customers don't want to see organizations do is give up," he said. "We worked through the night, we had an integrated team looking at this."

What they found is that the track circuit failure that shut down the system Tuesday was caused by an issue with an insulated joint. The joints are held in place with clips that have a plastic sleeve and one of the plastic sleeves was broken, according to Michael Morgan, director of rail operations for transit services.

That meant crews had to go out and find all the plastic sleeves that had failed and replace them. Of the 32 sleeves installed on the entire system, seven had to be replaced.

The 25 remaining clips are all in good condition, Morgan said, but the city will go back to the manufacturer to ask why the clips failed.

"We believe that, in short term, we're good to go and within a few days or a week we can replace them with a different configuration that will last longer, will be more effective," he said.

The city won't have to take the O-Train off-line to replace the remaining clips because the work can be done overnight during out-of-service hours, Morgan said.

The second failure was related to the signal system - it received an odd error message that had not come up in testing and that perplexed crews. The issue was eventually resolved by RailTerm, the company contracted to perform maintenance and repairs on the O-Train track.

Manconi told reporters he was already hearing reports that customers were back on the trains, and noted the 107 bus service would be phased down throughout the afternoon.

OC Transpo operated 75 uninterrupted O-Train trips Wednesday morning before relaunching the service, Manconi said, adding there was nothing to indicate the latest issues were weather-related.

He also said OC Transpo previously conducted hundreds of hours of testing and driver training and hired an independent team to assess the system before it was launched this week.

Still, he did not rule out future issues.

"Will we have interruptions in the future? Absolutely, I cannot guarantee you we will not," he said.

The \$60-million O-Train upgrade was intended to double the number of trains on the line to four, cutting wait times to nine minutes for peak times Monday to Saturday and to 15 minutes in the evenings and on Sunday.

O-Train System Shuts Down 8 Times in 3 Months Since Trillium Line Expansion

The O-Train has been shut down eight times since a \$60 million expansion three months ago promised more convenient and reliable service.

Some commuters have expressed their frustration about re-occurring issues with signals.

Andrew Grenier called it an "endless mess" that seems to happen at least once a week.

OC Transpo runs the Route 107 bus when the train is shut down, but riders like Grenier say the trains unpredictability make it difficult to rely on.

The new system is partially to blame for some of the recent delays, says Coun. Michael Qaqish, vice-president of the City of Ottawa's transit commission.

"There'll be some tweaking that needs to be done and I think we're seeing that as part of the signalization problems in the north-south route," Qaqish said.

Spring Mechanism in Switch Latest Issue

Troy Charter, the assistant general manager for transit operations, said in a statement Thursday that since the implementation of a new service on 2 Mar 2015 the Trillium Line "has experienced several issues with track components... a combination of existing and new equipment... that has impacted service."

The most recent shut-down came about because of problems encountered during routine maintenance of the south switch at Carleton Station.

O-Train Repairs

"While this work was planned to occur overnight with no impact to service, the crew encountered difficulty with the spring mechanism, a mechanical element within the switch, and as a result the work was not completed during the overnight period," wrote Charter.

"As the switch was not functioning, the signal system operated as it should and as such the trains did not receive the series of permissive green signals along the Trillium Line allowing the trains to initiate service."

Grenier said he has filed formal complaints to OC Transpo about the issues.

He said he worries about what the service will be like when the east-west Confederation

Line opens.

The O-Train resumed service Wednesday afternoon

The first spike: Track is laid for beginning of Confederation line

The clanging of sledgehammers on steel spikes rang out Friday as Mayor Jim Watson and area politicians helped lay the first section of track for the \$2.1-billion Confederation line.

The short section of rail at the new Belfast Yard facility will eventually be connected to the 12.5-kilometre line, which will run from Tunney's Pasture in the west to Blair station in the east.

"It was a very proud moment," the mayor said. "An event like this at least shows there is light at the end of the tunnel and there is a train coming. It will be tested in 2017 and ready for customer service for 2018."

Belfast Yard buzzed with construction activity, as the facility containing maintenance bays is to be finished by summer's end.

Friday's milestone sets the stage for the Transitway to be converted to light rail, starting this summer (the eastern leg between Hurdman and Blair closes June 28).

Transit service along the eastern section of the Transitway will be relocated to new bus lanes on Regional Road 174, Highway 417, and other parallel corridors.

## Expansion Study Flags Train Safety Changes

The city doesn't know yet if its \$34-million fleet of new Trillium Line trains will be allowed under a rail expansion plan.

The concerns about the Alstom Coradia LINT diesel trains just recently put into commission are part of a blanket risk assessment done for the entire Stage 2 blueprint.

A study of the Trillium Line expansion to Riverside South, with a spur line to the Ottawa International Airport, points out the Alstom LINT trains currently being manufactured have "crash management" specifications that are "more stringent" than the six trains the city received in 2013 and put on the Trillium Line last March.

The issue becomes whether or not Transport Canada will allow trains with two different safety profiles operate on the same line.

The study, which is included in the big Stage 2 report published this week, points out project costs could rise if the city needs to buy a completely new fleet of trains.

However, the city's LRT executive advisor, Nancy Schepers, is optimistic the feds will be fine with the potential train mix.

"City staff have already engaged Transport Canada on this issue and it is not anticipated that fleet replacement will be required," Schepers said in an eMail.

Schepers pointed out the study's role is to flag potential risks and those will be investigated further during the preliminary engineering phase of the project.

The trains are cited as one of four "key issues" for the Trillium Line expansion, along with airspace and runway protection around the airport, capacity of trains to meet the ridership demand, and the potential to find cost savings.

The study also addresses how the line would work with an airport spur.

If the airport spur is built, there could be a "mixed operating model" to serve Riverside South and the airport differently, depending on the day and the demand.

A "shuttle" train could run from South Keys to the airport during morning and afternoon weekday peak times, allowing unimpeded service between Bayview and Riverside South.

The shuttle would serve Riverside South at the other times, with through-trains running between Bayview and the airport.

Establishing an airport rail link by 2023 is still up in the air.

The \$155-million cost for an airport spur isn't plugged into the city's \$3-billion Stage 2 estimate.

The city expects the airport, an obvious beneficiary of public rail service, could help with the funding.

A spokeswoman for the airport authority said Tuesday the organization has "ongoing and positive discussions" with the city regarding the rail link.

23/01/2016 *Ottawa Citizen**Otrain*

There hadn't been a report of the Trillium Line O-Train going through a signal in 14 years.

That streak ended on Nov. 18, 2015.

Council and the transit commission learned Friday that Transport Canada flagged two instances of a train going through signals in the last two months of the year.

There was no damage and no one was hurt, but now the city has to explain to the federal agency what it will do to reduce the hazards.

In the November incident, a train stopped past a signal located before the crossroads of the Trillium Line and the Via Rail line.

Then, on Dec. 24, a train stopped beyond a signal at the passing track near Gladstone Avenue.

According to a memo sent by city manager Kent Kirkpatrick, staff notified rail authorities. The "railway systems performed as intended," he says.

The federal inspector, in a letter to the city, cited the "frequency of emergency brake application events" affecting train operators and "compromising safe operating practices."

The city spent \$60 million on an upgrade of the Trillium Line. The expansion, which launched last March, included new trains and improvements to the signal system.

24/09/2017 *CBC News**Otrain*

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.

13/10/2017 *CBC News**Otrain*

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."

18/11/2017 *OC Transpo**Otrain*

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.

Take the "Eh-Train"

Ottawa Ontario - Fancy a ride on the Majestic Moose?

How about heading into work on the Rocket Richard?

Those are just two of the 40 names revealed today for the rail cars that will soon travel along Ottawa's two light rail lines.

The City of Ottawa announced the names, which were submitted by children under 16 during a contest last November, at a ceremony Saturday morning at Ben Franklin Place.

The city said it received nearly 2,000 entries, which were then narrowed down to the winners.

The winning entries drew on a mix of both local and Canadian history, and also included some Indigenous names.

The names of the six Trillium Line cars are:

Nanuq-Polar Bear;

Northern Lights;

Rocket Richard;

Dreamcatcher;

Emily Murphy;

Portage.

Congratulations to all contest winners of the Name The Train Contest.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the competition - Jim Watson 24 Feb 2018.

The names of the 34 Confederation line cars are:

Canada Goose;

Farley Mowat;

Gord Downie;

Inuksuk;

John McCrae;

Logdriver-Draveur;

Lord Stanley;

Louis Riel;

Majestic Moose;

Odawa;

Poppy;

Snowbird;

Bluenose;

Boreal;

Emily Carr;

Jacques Cartier;

Juno;

Nathan Cirillo;

Normandy;

Samuel de Champlain;

Thomas D'Arcy McGee;

Totem;

Tundra;

Wagosh-Fox;

Acadia;

Agnes Macphail;

Amik-Beaver;

Bertha Wilson;

Billy Bishop;

Eh-Train;

Henrietta Edwards;

Maple Taffy;

The Mountie;

George Brown.

Mayor Jim Watson, councillors Stephen Blais, Keith Egli, and general manager of transportation John Manconi presented the 40 winners with two free tickets for the inaugural ride of the Confederation Line.

The 12.5 kilometre line, which runs from Tunney's Pasture in the west to Blair Station in the east, is running six months behind schedule but is expected to open in November 2018

Chance Missed to mark LRT Milestone

The first LRT train travelled through the downtown tunnel on the weekend, right to the edge of Tunney's Pasture.

One would have thought, \$2 billion and five-plus years later, this would be cause for celebration. Where was the magnum of champagne being rapturously smashed on the bow (the bumper?) of the train - the ribbon-cutting by Watson-Naqvi-Chiarelli-McKenna Inc., the appearance of the town crier and Dave Smith? Instead, we had a tweet from the mayor on a Saturday afternoon. Then - hang on - some retweets!

This was a lost opportunity, in other words. But this has been the story with the whole building of the LRT. There has, I think, been a failure to engage the public in pride-building in the biggest project the city has ever undertaken. Mass humility, dearest Ottawa, is overrated.

You know, people love watching things being built. This is why they cut holes in hoarding when a highrise goes up, because everyone has a little kid inside them. We want to see. When they did that rapid bridge renewal on the Queensway, for Pete's sake, they had to install bleachers for all the curious.

During tunnel construction, I wondered why someone didn't mount a webcam so we could peek at daily progress. Why not tell us how many feet they crunched through every day? Where was the boatload of hoopla when the tunnel was finally finished? I mean, I once watched an entire documentary on the making of the Chunnel from England to France. Fascinating.

Where was our riveting story of human achievement by mighty machines? Untold.

These people have ripped up downtown (for years), gummed up Scott Street (for years), rerouted our daily flow. Can't we have the odd high-five?

Why, too, isn't there a trainfacsimile on display somewhere so people can at least have a look inside?

(I see by the web - where we're to learn everything - the train has 14 doors, carries about 300 but with only 120 seats and will travel an average of 35 km/ hour.)

Why, too, isn't there an LRT office downtown that brags about the great stuff we're doing, with models and mock-ups and answers to every question we might possibly have?

Oh, for the days of Guy Laflamme and his heart-stopping, fire-breathing Godzillas to chase the bores away!

And it isn't just me. Here was a followup tweet from Graham Richardson at CTV Ottawa to the transit commission boss, Stephen Blais: "How about allowing a camera down there and we will do a live show? I have been asking for months."

Instead we had this tweet from His Worship: "An incredible and exciting view from inside the LRT tunnel! A train has gone underground just after uOttawa station, travelled through Rideau, Parliament & Lyon stations and emerged at the West portal, just before Pimisi station! It's on it's way to Tunney's!"

David Jeanes is president of Transport Action Canada and a pretty wise man when it comes to all things rail. He agreed the city missed a chance to put on braggly boots and blast its own horn on the weekend.

"I agree. You'd think when there's a good news story, it would be good to have the media and the public aware of it."

He's been watching the construction of LRT pretty closely, partly by relying on weekly updates from the Confederation Line website.

"It's not really engaging the public as well as it could. And I think for a project of this cost, you could certainly afford to have a lot more public information."

After the fiasco of the Rideau Street sinkhole, one might have thought completion of this tricky section - and the tunnel itself - would be a milestone worth a holler or two.

"The actual day that they broke through was never announced," Jeanes said.

"In the east end," he said, "the Blair and Cyrville stations are virtually complete, as are the Belfast yards. Would it be so hard to have public tours one weekend? In 2017 we had Kontinuum, after all, during which tens of thousands managed to take an underground acid trip through the partially built Lyon station without actually perishing."

Public safety is obviously an issue and there may be an abundance of caution being exercised by Rideau Transit Group, which is building the system under contract. It may suit them just to finish the job and hand over the keys, forgoing the dog-and-pony part.

But a thing to remember about a paying audience: We love a dog, we love a pony, we don't love a tweet.

The city responded to our inquiries with the following statement:

"An O -train Confederation Line train was moved from the eastern alignment to the western end over the weekend. This move was part of the testing and commissioning of the train, tracks and guideway. As testing schedules shift due to a number of factors, it was not possible to hold a media event at a precise time. Testing from Tunney's Pasture and the West Portal will now occur on a regular basis, as has been underway for several months from Blair to uOttawa Station.

"The City of Ottawa and RTG are focused on meeting the revised Revenue Service Availability date and launching a reliable, efficient and environmentally friendly LRT system in November of this year.

"Updates on the progress of construction and testing are provided at the Finance and Economic Development Committee. The next update on the Confederation Line will be presented on May 1, 2018." - Steve Cripps, director, O -Train construction

Gatineau reveals \$2.1B LRT plan, eyes 2028 launch

Ambitious plan covers 26 km, includes 2 links to Ottawa's light rail system

Gatineau has unveiled its ambitious vision for a 26-kilometre, \$2.1-billion light rail line that will link the Aylmer and Plateau sectors to its downtown and cross two bridges to connect with Ottawa's growing light rail system.

The city is releasing preliminary plans today, launching a process officials hope will bring electric, above-ground light rail by 2028.

One line would start at the intersection of chemin Eardley and boulevard des Allumetières in Gatineau's west end and pass through 18 stations.

It would cross the Ottawa River over the Alexandra Bridge, connecting with Ottawa's Confederation Line at the future Rideau station.

One spur off that main line would cross the Prince of Wales bridge, linking a station at boulevards Alexandre-Taché and Saint-Joseph to Ottawa's Bayview station, itself a link between Ottawa's north-south Trillium Line and east-west Confederation Line.

A second spur would do a near-loop through Gatineau's Plateau neighbourhood, starting at Alexandre-Taché and boulevard Saint-Raymond, then following boulevard du Plateau and chemin Vanier to des Allumetières, passing through 12 stations.

The light rail line would connect to the Rapibus line at the Alexandre-Taché/Saint-Joseph station.

In its presentation, the city said it wants a reliable, efficient, environmentally friendly link between the fast-growing west end and Plateau areas and the jobs in Ottawa-Gatineau's core.

Gatineau will now embark on nearly two years of study and consultation on the plan, and hopes to have a final design ready by March 2020.

After that would come environmental assessments, construction and the launch of the service by 2028.

Gatineau city council has already approved the planning process, but would also have to approve any final concept.

No funding plan

The project is still at its earliest stage, and it's not clear who will pay for the multi-billion dollar line.

"I don't want to get into that discussion now, we will get there," said Gatineau Mayor Maxime Pedneaud-Jobin.

"But I think we will find solutions because it's good for all of us."

He said he expects a funding agreement to be signed shortly. Gatineau plans to ask the federal and provincial governments to foot the majority of the bill.

Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard, who is leading his party into an election on Oct. 1, has pledged to support a light rail line in Gatineau that would connect to Ottawa.

Pedneaud-Jobin said he wants to get all political parties running in the next Quebec election on-record as supporting the line.

Hull-Aylmer Liberal MP Greg Fergus has long been a supporter of a light rail link between Aylmer and downtown Gatineau.

Ottawa won't pay, mayor says

The City of Ottawa owns the Prince of Wales bridge, but Gatineau and its partners will fully fund any future rail crossing, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson told his council colleagues in an email forwarded to CBC News. He would not agree to an interview because he had not been fully briefed on the proposal.

"The approach supports both transit agencies' long term objectives of a fully integrated system, reducing the number of buses on our roads, eliminating gridlock and air pollution, and encouraging the use of public transit and active transportation," Watson wrote.

Watson told councillors that while he supports Gatineau's preliminary plan, his own long-term transit priority remains getting trains to Stittsville and Barrhaven.

He promised Ottawa will be consulted at every stage of Gatineau's LRT study, and said council will evaluate the impact on this city's transit system when Gatineau completes its study in 2020.

05/07/2018 Ottawa Citizen

Otrain

Copper-hunting cable crook hits Trillium Line

JON WILLING [jwilling@postmedia.com](mailto:jwilling@postmedia.com) [Twitter.com/JonathanWilling](https://twitter.com/JonathanWilling)

A crook, likely hunting for valuable copper, cut a signal cable on the Trillium Line while the trains were in service during the morning commute Tuesday.

The rail line was still down Wednesday morning and OC Transpo wasn't sure when it would be running again.

Troy Charter, director of transit operations at Transpo, said trains had been running up until around 7:30 a.m. Tuesday when the signals suddenly stopped functioning.

"This is critical infrastructure for our system," Charter said Wednesday. "The system relies on it to remotely control the switches and to set the stop and go signals for the trains. When we got that notification, the trains immediately stopped and we couldn't continue with service."

Charter said Transpo doesn't want to speculate, but it believes the crook was looking for copper.

"There was some cabling that was cut and removed," Charter said, but he declined to say where the damage happened for security reasons or if it was in the same place as a similar incident in March 2017. "We don't want to invite this from occurring," Charter said. "It's highly dangerous for people to be accessing the right-of-way when there's train movements going on."

Transpo special constables are working with Ottawa police on the cable heist. Charter said there are closed-circuit TV cameras in the area and any footage will be turned over to police.

The transit agency has been trying to reduce the number of cablecarrying poles along the tracks. The signal cables at various heights descend into housing units that power the system. Charter said by the end of this year Transpo will have eliminated the poles.

Charter didn't know how much the wire would cost to replace or how much revenue might be lost because of the train outage. Transpo has been running the parallel Route 107 bus service while the train is down.

"For us, it's the impact to the system the impact to our service and it's the inconvenience to our customers," Charter said. "We do immediately set up replacement Route 107 bus service, but the train has proven to be reliable and is very much a value-added part of our transportation network."

Trillium Line operations started at 6 a.m. Tuesday. The rail service was running fine until the signals went down about 90 minutes later, which suggests the crook might have been taking a big risk while trains were roaring down the track.

"It is highly dangerous and there are trains going through there. We have a very frequent service so it's very dangerous to do that," Charter said. "But the important for us here is the safety features of the system worked and we were immediately notified and unfortunately we're dealing with inconvenience for customers and it's taking a while to rectify the problem, but we'll get the system going as soon as possible."

Charter couldn't say if the Trillium Line will be operating again on Wednesday.

It's one thing to fix the cable, but Transpo needs to run several tests to make sure the signals are working before trains can resume carrying customers.

The Confederation Line LRT, which is scheduled to open in November, uses technology that runs cables underground and a wireless network. There won't be any overhead wires except for the energized overhead catenary lines that power the trains, Charter said.

"They're very, very different systems and different measures in place," Charter said.

"With the Stage 2 of the Trillium Line, with that expansion, and with the work we've been doing the past couple of years removing the poles, we believe we're effectively removing the problem on the Trillium Line."

The City of Ottawa is confirming an LRT train derailed at the Belfast Yard Friday morning.

The Director of Operations for OC Transpo, Troy Charter, says it happened during 'launch activities' around 5 a.m.

Charter says the train in question has 10 wheel sets and that one came off the track -calling this a minor setback.

OC Transpo is now conducting a full review.

"We don't take any occurrence lightly, we take them all very very seriously," Charter said. "When this occurred we seized launching other trains on the track."

The train has been put back on the tracks now.

Testing of the Confederation Line trains is ongoing. There is no hard date for when the Confederation Line will be ready. The latest estimated date for when the Rideau Transit Group will be ready to hand the system over to the City is on or before June 30

LRV Train Derails in Belfast Yard

Ottawa Ontario - An LRT train came off the track at the Belfast Yard maintenance and storage facility Friday morning in what city officials are characterizing as a "minor setback."

Troy Charter, the city's director of transit operations, said one of the two-car train's 10 wheel sets left the track at around 05:00 while the train was about to begin ongoing testing.

"It happened in the yard where the trains are operating at a slow rate of speed," Charter said during a new conference early Friday afternoon.

"Our system, staff, and all our resources responded accordingly."

The train has been placed back on the track, and Charter said testing was set to resume later Friday afternoon.

There were no injuries in the incident, Charter confirmed.

Absolutely Normal

Both Charter and Claude Jacob, general manager of the maintenance arm of Rideau Transit Group (RTG), characterized the incident as minor.

"It's absolutely normal," Jacob said, noting similar derailments happen with rail systems worldwide.

"In any rail system you could have this occur," Charter agreed.

"This is a minor setback."

Charter said a thorough review will be conducted to determine how the incident occurred.

The derailment is the latest issue plaguing the Confederation Line construction, which has been delayed three times.

It was originally supposed to be completed a year ago, but didn't make that initial deadline due to setbacks caused by the June 2016 sinkhole on Rideau Street.

Then RTG, the consortium building the LRT system that runs from Blair to Tunney's Pasture, set two more deadlines, which it then missed, one for November 2018, and another for March 2019.

CBC has also reported on the challenges faced by trains operating in winter conditions.

The Alstom Citadis Spirit trains have not been used in a North American city before, according to the manufacturer.

Pay No Attention to That Minor LRV Derailment

Ottawa Ontario - A two-car train that will form part of Ottawa's new light-rail system went off the tracks on Friday.

And the message to future riders of the LRT was, move along.

Nothing to see here.

Just another ho-hum derailment.

"Perfectly normal," we were told.

Both a city official and the general manager of the Rideau Transit Group played down the accident, terming it "a minor setback."

That's because no one was hurt and "it was not a situation where the train was on its side," as the city expert explained.

Do you feel reassured?

Ready to hop on this same train one day soon?

Let's see, so far, we have an LRT system whose builders have missed their hand over deadline to the city three times (they still haven't set a new date).

A system that, according to documents obtained by the CBC, might not be winter-ready.

A system that, based on hundreds of pages of inspection reports obtained by this newspaper, has problems with crumbly concrete and questionable water-proofing.

And who can forget the sorry saga of 160,000 board feet of wood, specially milled for the LRT stations, that warped after it was improperly treated with fire retardant?

Oh, and there was that tiny sinkhole on Rideau Street when they were initially boring the tunnel for the LRT.

Meanwhile, the wise elected people on city council have breezily signed off on Stage 2 of the rail adventure, at a cost \$4.66 billion (more than \$1 billion over the initial estimate), approved the central involvement of SNC-Lavalin, which is in bad odour at the federal level (the city auditor general will now study the procurement process), and put their stamp of approval on an airport link that will have travellers transferring trains three times to get downtown.

So the city, and RTG, should understand if a few eyebrows are raised over Friday's "minor" derailment.

Instead, Ottawa's director of transit operations, Troy Charter, soothingly offered up this, "We are taking every effort to make sure the system is in the state of readiness our customers expect. We are doing a detailed review to make sure it will be a safe and reliable system for our customers."

Uh-huh.

Sure.

Let's start with greater openness about accidents of this type.

If you want people to actually choose LRT, let's not try to convince folks a derailment is "perfectly normal."

Let's give them adult info.

The city's, and RTG's, current childish approach is completely off track



The derailment of a two-car LRT train that happened less than 100 metres from the Belfast Road train yard was a "perfectly normal" occurrence, the general manager of Rideau Transit Group told reporters Friday.

The train yard tracks are very tight together near the train yard. "It places the train in a difficult position. We don't like when it happens. A derailment in a yard happens," Claude Jacob said.

Two of the train's 10 wheels left the track at about 5 a.m. Friday, said the city's director of transit operations, Troy Charter.

No one was hurt.

"Our system, our people, our resources responded appropriately," Charter said. "This was a minor setback."

Derailment is a technical term, he added. "It was not a situation where the train was on its side."

The incident occurred at low speed while workers were testing to see what launch would be like. It took a couple of hours to return the wheels to the rail.

Charter said there was no reason to believe the tracks caused the derailment.

"We are taking every effort to make sure the system is in the state of readiness our customers expect," he said. "We are doing a detailed review to make sure it will be a safe and reliable system for our customers."

It is still unclear when the LRT will be ready for the public to ride. An update is to be presented Friday.

A photo of the scene showed part of the train off the tracks with roughly a dozen city workers gathered around the front of the train.

Ottawa police were not called to the scene, nor was Ottawa fire.

Ottawa's LRT construction has been the recent subject of numerous issues.

The Rideau Transit Group, the construction consortium responsible for building the transit system, said earlier this year it would miss its March 31 deadline to hand over a completed Stage 1 LRT to the city. The project has now missed three deadlines and no official new target date has been set for the city takeover, though the city hopes for a summer launch date.

Man Dies After Having Heart Attack On Otrain

Ottawa Paramedics say a 50-year-old man has died after having a heart attack while riding the Trillium Line O-Train Thursday morning.

The call came in at 7:58 a.m. from the Carleton-bound train.

Paramedics say other riders on the train started CPR when it happened, and the man was defibrillated by an A.E.D. on the train. Paramedics arrived on scene and performed advanced life-support treatments, but the man was later pronounced dead.

Ottawa Police and OC Transpo Special Constables are investigating.

OC Transpo suspended O-Train service for much of the morning, but resumed service at 11:30 a.m.

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.

## 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.

## 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.

Is the Trillium Line the most efficient single track line in North America?

Ottawa Ontario - The new light rail line in the city of Ottawa has finally been put on the map the way officials had hoped.

For months the rail line has been criticized for poor service due to mechanical failures, etc., but Christof Spieler, author of "Trains, Buses, People: An Opinionated Atlas of US Transit," revealed his latest transit mapping on his Twitter page on Ottawa's Trillium Line.

Spierer calls the Trillium Line the most frequent commuter rail service in North America on a single track line, claiming the Bayview Station, located at the end of the line, sees more trains a day than San Francisco's Caltrain station, which has 12 times as many tracks.

"As a train pulled into Bayview, you'd see the passengers get off, and the operator leave her cab and switch ends. Eight minutes after arriving the train pulls out in the opposite direction. Four minutes after that, the next train pulls in, then leaves after another eight minutes. A train every 12 minutes," Spierer says.

Spierer then offers up a play-by-play, following the train out of the Bayview Station.

"Just after leaving it reaches a passing siding, a short section of double track. It meets the next train. This isn't the, wait in a cornfield and hope you move again sometime, you may have experienced on Amtrak. The two trains are precisely scheduled to meet," Spierer says.

After Bayview, the next station is Carling, which is just four minutes away, and then comes Carleton, which is the only double-track station on the line.

Mooney's Bay, another single-track station, is the next stop.

"And after that, another passing siding, where you meet another train. And then, 16 minutes after Bayview, you pull into Greenboro, the final stop," Spierer describes.

The total trip consists of three short double-track segments where trains meet, and Spierer credits all-door boarding with level platforms, proof-of-purchase fares, trains that accelerate well, and a good signal system for making it all possible.

"This is absolutely maximizing the infrastructure. But, above all, it's due to attitude. Usually, when a U.S. transit agency wants to improve a commuter rail line, they hire a consultant to come up with a plan for infrastructure, and in this case they'd come up with a few billion dollars for a double track. Instead, OC Transpo focused on service and just built the infrastructure they absolutely needed, three sidings in exactly the right places. They're using smart operations rather than concrete to solve problems," Spierer claims.

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Otrain

Egan: The original O-Train, a \$26.4M pilot, and the runaway train it spawned

When the original O-Train was launched on Oct. 15, 2001, it was late and over budget, a little Thomas-We-Told-You-So ahead of its time.

It cost \$26.4 million, which seems laughably little today, only had five stops, went under Dow's Lake and, save Carleton University, connected not much to not much. Officially, merely a "pilot project."

Still, after a 42-year absence, Ottawa was back in the train transit business and the eight-kilometre stretch went on to pave - better yet unpave - the way for the biggest public investment the city has ever undertaken: the two-stage, \$4.7 billion LRT system that is ripe with both hope and hysteria 18 years later.

The closure of the original O-Train (now the Trillium Line) on Saturday for two years was a moment to wonder what the little line had wrought.

David Jeanes thought so, as he had a front row seat to the line's creation while sitting on a municipal steering committee. Possibly Ottawa's best train-iac, Jeanes decided to take a last trip on the line on Friday, carrying a "social distancing" stick to make sure it was all COVID-19 copacetic..

"I had a farewell trip, from end to end."

In 2001, it was, indeed, a novelty. I can remember taking my son there when he was but a youngster, zipping along the old track in a spiffy railcar, going nowhere in particular and back. News coverage from the day said many others were doing the same.

Compared to the overhead-wire LRT, the original O-Train was fairly simple to create. It used existing track, a proven "off-the-shelf" Bombardier diesel train and had a route schedule that was not overly ambitious (every 15 minutes).

And it worked. On good days, it ran like a Rolex, and ridership began to exceed expectations. First estimated at 6,400 riders a day, total trips hit 12,000 daily by 2011. In the last seven years, it had a 99-per-cent on-time rate.

Jeanes said Carleton students even began living near O-Train stops, in non-traditional neighbourhoods like Greenboro and Hintonburg, only a few transit minutes from the campus.

As the O-Train grew, it was upgraded. The city was "given the keys" to six brand new trains in 2013, diesel-electrics made by a company called Alstom, a name we would come to conjugate colourfully in 2019. There went \$34 million, part of a \$60-million upgrade to the system that allowed more frequent trips.

"The O-Train has been an incredible success story for the city," Coun. Diane Deans said at the time. "Since 2001, it has carried more than 21 million riders, and the current expansion project will enable the O-Train to carry even more passengers, more frequently and in greater comfort."

The new system was to open in 2014. But, alas - and how many signs was god expected to send us? - the start of the new trains was delayed until March 2015. And launch day was cursed.

There was to be a media event at Carleton University at 9:30 a.m. but a switch malfunction had transit commission boss Stephen Blais stuck at Greenboro - with OC Transpo general manager John Manconi, no less - and the pair arrived an hour late to find a platform full of angry commuters.

"Just like when you buy a brand new house, you move in, you expect everything to be perfect and every once and a while there's a couple things that aren't exactly the way they are supposed to be," said the transit chairman, one of those out-of-the-mouths of Blais moments.

(Accidentally - at least we think it was - Mayor Jim Watson was absent with a broken pelvis suffered in a bizarre skidoo mishap the previous weekend.)

Jeanes, meanwhile, thinks there were many opportunities lost to expand diesel service, using existing track to places like Bells Corners and Kanata and over the Prince of Wales bridge to Gatineau.

Now, onward to the next stage.

Though the pandemic will invariably slow things up, a consortium is aiming to substantially complete the 16-km extension of the Trillium Line by August 2022. It will include eight new stations, links to the airport, and connections to fast-growing areas like Riverside South.

Also on the way are seven new diesel trains, made by Stadler, a Swiss company.

(Robust as they are, diesels were not considered a serious option to operate along the entire LRT line because they aren't a good idea in a tunnel, due to fumes, fuel hazard, and overall environmental footprint compared to electric.)

Jeanes, a board member of Transport Action Canada, said a friend of his went out near midnight on the weekend to digitally capture the last train on the track. Wise idea. In times as weird as these, no one knows for certain when a train next chugs down the historic track.