

# Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers - 2015

Thursday 08/01/2015 Ottawa Citizen Otrain

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."

17/02/2015 Brockville Recorder Brockville Brockville

Brockville Tunnel Contract Backed

Brockville Ontario - Critical design work on Brockville's railway tunnel project, aimed at turning the tunnel into a history-themed tourist attraction, is a step closer to happening.

Council's finance, administration, and operations committee is recommending the full council approve a contract with the firm Inspec-Sol Inc., for an "upset limit fee" of \$132,500, not including HST, "to complete the engineering design and preparation of tender documents for the work required to open the Brockville Railway Tunnel to the public."

The full council is expected to put the matter to a final vote next Tuesday.

The contract is for preliminary work, including a cost estimate, on a larger restoration project currently expected to cost between \$1.5 million and \$2 million. While project skeptic Councillor Jeff Earle questioned doing yet another study of the tunnel, the project's main proponent, Councillor David LeSueur, insisted this is not a study.

The work involves drawing up tender documents so contractors can bid on the work, said city operations director Conal Cosgrove.

Some rock and masonry needs to be stabilized, he added, and other elements of the design work involve drainage matters, public safety code requirements, and the laying of a path on the ground through the tunnel.

"The purpose of this work is to put all of this together in a document that can be bid on by contractors," said Cosgrove.

"This is the next step, actually nailing down the cost of the tunnel," added LeSueur, chairman of the Brockville railway tunnel advisory committee.

For now, the overall vision is of a \$4 million plan to make a tourist attraction of Canada's oldest railway tunnel, which includes amenities added on to this basic restoration.

The tunnel committee hopes to have a small tour train taking visitors through the tunnel and to other attractions, a dining car, playground, and visitor centre, as well as a roundhouse at the north portal that could be used as a community centre.

It hopes to see that entire project done by 1 Jul 2017, coinciding with Canada's 150th anniversary.

Council has committed \$300,000 toward the railway tunnel over four years starting last year, and has also included the project on its list of capital priorities.

Fundraising is a critical part of making the project happen, and LeSueur told the committee the tunnel group has identified a number of funding opportunities for requests.

He expects to hear back about those applications in six months to a year.

"We're going after the large amounts," said LeSueur.

Applying for those grants will be difficult without having this engineering design work on hand to identify the scope and nature of the project, said Councillor Jane Fullarton.

The Inspec-Sol bid was the middle submission, in terms of cost, of three bids, with the highest coming in at \$295,715 and the lowest at \$85,565.

Cost was only one factor city officials evaluated, looking also at such things as staff experience, references, schedule, and "demonstrated understanding of the project."

Funding for the design work is to come from the city's special railway tunnel capital account.

Train Plan Goes Public

Wakefield Quebec - While Minister of Justice and MLA for the Outaouais Stephanie Vallee says she must remain neutral when it comes to the proposed steam train projects, the MLA couldn't help but show a glimmer of support for the Wakefield track.

"I've said it in the past, I'll continue saying it, we have a major public investment in the track. I think we have a responsibility towards those investments," Vallee told the Low Down.

"Instead of just saying, oh no, it's just too bad, we just put \$10 million in the project and it's just money, well it's our money."

On 26 Feb 2015, Vallee met with the President of the Wakefield Steam Train Group (WSTG) Marc Fournier to get a sense of the project, and of course, receive a chocolate train.

"It was my turn to receive one, which was very sweet," Vallee said with a smile.

The Minister says the train file has always been of importance to her, and calls the project a vital part of economic development in the Gatineau Hills.

"I was obviously pleased to see that there was a project presented, Fournier decided with local business people to present, a very interesting project, and I want to thank them because they decided to come up with an idea, and submit something, and be active in the file."

Fournier, who owns the Wakefield Confiserie, says that since the business plan went public, he's received lots of positive feedback both from businesses and the general public.

"I had a client walk in the shop yesterday saying he couldn't believe it's going to impact the whole area. Compared to what the train used to be the impact on the Gatineau Hills will be greater."

Fournier adds he's even received a phone call from another local business interested in contributing to the project.

The final recommendations to la Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO) must be in by the end of March.

At that point, the deciding board will have a few weeks to make a final decision on the project.

"There's a lot of work still ahead, even if we do get the project," Fournier said.

"Like financing, for example, but it's looking good."

In the next few weeks, the WSTG will be seeking letters of support for the business plan itself, something they'd like to submit by the end of March along with final recommendations to the CCFO.

**Wednesday 25/02/2015 Ottawa Citizen Other**

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

Darlston 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," Darlston 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.

**Tuesday 03/03/2015 Ottawa Citizen Otrain**

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.

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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.

Moodie rail crossing signals out of control

The warning signals at a level train crossing were out of control Wednesday in Ottawa's west end, this time on Moodie Drive near Fallowfield Road. Ottawa city officials sent out an announcement after the problem was noticed just after 10 a.m. that motorists should avoid the area. The cause was unknown and city officials were unable to say how long the problem would last.

Tunnel Jumper Charged With Stunt Driving

Brockville Ontario - An attempt to "jump" the Water Street railway tunnel early Friday led to a 19-year-old motorist being charged with stunt driving.

City police arrived in the process of an attempted jump after receiving complaints about the operation of a vehicle on city streets shortly after midnight.

The driver was issued a summons for a future court date and the vehicle was impounded for seven days.

Steam Train Promoters Offer Three Options

Wakefield Quebec - As work continues to relaunch the steam train, the three proposals, Gatineau to Lke Beauchamp, Gatineau to Montebello, and Wakefield south to the former CPR siding at Alcan, also known as Morrison's Quarry, were put through a challenge function on Friday by a panel of experts.

The Wakefield option is the most cost-effective in overall terms.

The time spent on all 3 options shows the desire of the community to relaunch the train in one form or another.

As a former employee of the Hull, Chelsea, and Wakefield operation, I am anxious to see something happen as are the other former employees.

From a viability perspective, the Wakefield operation seems to make the most sense although it will necessitate the construction of new maintenance and turning facilities as well as a road haul of equipment to get around the damaged areas of the line.

In terms of mileage, the Wakefield proposal would see a round trip of about 7 miles, not huge, but designed for tourists who want an experience but not something that consumes most of their time and which can be pricey.

There are lots of successful precedents for such an operation in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Small is beautiful.

How Ottawa's 'town that never was' went off the rails, to be forgotten (with sketch and aerial photo)

A piece of Ottawa history hidden for almost 100 years off Hunt Club Road was quietly buried recently to make room for a mall parking lot. It was called Rideau Yard and it was the nucleus of a town that never was.

Ottawa at one time had a number of railway roundhouses, including one at 300 West Hunt Club Rd. The site, concealed for a century in a vacant industrial lot near Antares Drive, had been our last roundhouse location to survive development.

I noticed the remains of the site when I saw a large circular pit in a vacant field. With some research, I learned it was a remnant of a large railway station and century-old ghost town called "Rideau Yard" that was built in 1915.

Constructed by the Canadian Northern Railway company, Rideau Yard opened with great expectations of handling both freight and passenger rail traffic passing between Quebec and Vancouver on the newly constructed TransContinental Rail line. This grand, new station south of Ottawa was an ambitious development that housed an 80-foot turntable and a 15-stall roundhouse, where steam locomotives were maintained. Later re-named Federal Yard, it was to be the epicentre for Ottawa's newest suburb, boasting a summer hotel and residential streets mapped out close to the Rideau River.

Yet this vision of a new town south of Ottawa never came to fruition and eventually fell into financial troubles. Canadian Northern Railway shut down Rideau Yard and the dreams of their south Ottawa development came to an end in 1922.

The hotel was being used by railway employees instead of visiting passengers, and the roundhouse and other auxiliary buildings were demolished some time around 1930. Their ruins became cloaked in overgrowth up until last month when it was finally buried to make way for a new mall.

I had wanted to document what was left of this century-old railway station before it was lost forever. A 1980 edition of the Bytown Railway Society publication "Branch Line" included a series of maps and recollections by former employees. This helped me reconstruct what may have been there.

On the site, there was a vast area of roundhouse ruins with railway artifacts strewn about. An aerial image from the National Air Photo Library clearly shows the outline of the old roundhouse building and the turntable.

Bricks from the roundhouse, pieces of twisted metal and other remnants of the lost station have now been buried under the development, which according to the Trinity Development Group website plan, will now become a Sandman Hotel.

When I explored the area last November, the turntable's open pit and centre pivot structure were concealed under a cover of vegetation but it was easy to imagine a once bustling railway station and steam locomotives trundling on their way in and out of Ottawa on the TransContinental line.

Using the similar roundhouse and turntable complex that was restored and is currently maintained by Toronto's Railway Museum and the Steam Whistle Brewery in Toronto for comparison, we can visualize what Ottawa's Rideau Yard station may have looked like when it was in operation 100 years ago.

Once labelled the most contaminated site in Ottawa, this "brownfield" property is now owned by Toronto's Unitrin and Triform Developments, which were given a grant from the City of Ottawa to deal with the contaminated land.

**Wednesday 06/05/2015 CBC News Lachute**

CBC News May 6 Wed

The historic Wakefield steam train that's been offline for the past four years could be back on the rails by 2017, but its new route likely won't take it through the town that made it famous.

The Compagnie de Chemin de Fer de l'Outaouais, or CCFO — the corporation managed by the municipalities of Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche that oversees the train — decided Wednesday on its new route, which will run from Masson-Angers to Montebello.

The Montebello route was chosen over two other proposals: an urban route through Gatineau and another route that would have taken the tourist train back to Wakefield.

'Confused and disappointed'

The decision to run the train to Montebello instead of Wakefield is an unfortunate one, said Marc Fournier, president of the Wakefield Steam Group.

"We're confused and disappointed. We've fulfilled all the requirements and still we end up with no project," said Fournier, who owns a confectionery in the town. "It belongs in Wakefield."

Fournier added he's not ruling out the possibility his group will buy a different vintage steam train and operate its own tourist run.

The century-old train hasn't been in operation since 2011 when the rail bed between Gatineau and Wakefield was washed out during heavy rains.

The promoters of the Montebello route now have until the end of August to get their finances in place and shorten the route from the current three hours to 90 minutes.

If all the requirements are met, the train could be in operation along the new route by 2017.

**03/06/2015 VIA Rail Canada Beachburg**

Railway infrastructure upgrade for better service in your area

VIA Rail Canada Inc. inform you about the upcoming upgrade of the railway infrastructure in your neighbourhood. Beginning the week of May 4, construction will begin on a new siding track near the Revelstoke community of Ottawa South.

The map below illustrates the section of track where construction will take place.

The work will begin in the non-residential area on the western side (indicated in red), transitioning into the residential area later in the week (indicated in blue).

The project will be completed in two phases: preparation of grading (May-June) and track and signal work (June - early September). Construction activities could generate noise, vibration and dust from certain activities at the beginning of the project. Please be advised that in order to ensure the project is completed on schedule, some night construction work is anticipated. VIA Rail Canada Inc. is working closely with the City of Ottawa and our contractors to conduct this work with minimal disturbance to local residents.

In addition to improving the comfort, safety and reliability of our transportation service for our local customers, these upgrades form part of our commitment to the City of Ottawa to improve traffic flow along at high congestion crossings, particularly during rush hour periods.

In addition to the siding track construction, our contractor will be conducting vegetation control on VIA Rail Canada property along the rail line. In accordance with Track Safety regulations, VIA Rail Canada Inc. is required to ensure vegetation on our property does not impede sight lines to the traffic signal system and that any vegetation that poses a potential fire hazard or safety risk are cut back or removed. This includes vegetation that poses a safety risk of falling onto private property or the rail tracks themselves. This work will be confined to VIA Rail Canada's right-of-way on the rail line and will consist of cutting of brush and vegetation which constitute a hazard to the public as well as VIA Rail Canada employees. As required, prior notification of brush cutting adjacent to a residential property will be provided.

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

Negligence on the part of Via Rail was a contributing cause of the crash between an OC Transpo bus and a passenger train, the City of Ottawa alleges in its first legal defence of the civil lawsuits filed in relation to the fatal accident.

The city is also claiming the damages being sought are excessive and asking that the lawsuits against the city and the estate of driver David Woodard be dismissed with costs.

In statements of defence in response to lawsuits filed by the families of late passengers Michael Bleakney and Rob More, the city denies there was "any negligence, breach of duty or want of care on its part" that contributed to the collision on Sept. 18, 2013, at a level crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station.

The crash killed Woodard and passengers Bleakney, More, Kyle Nash, Connor Boyd and Karen Krzyzewski. Bleakney and More's families are the only ones to have filed lawsuits against the city so far, although 10 surviving passengers have also sued. The city has yet to respond to any of those lawsuits.

Bleakney's family is seeking \$1.8 million in damages and More's family \$600,000.

The city's response defends Woodard as a "competent, trained and experienced driver" and maintains that the city took all reasonable steps to ensure he was capable of driving the double-decker bus in a "safe and prudent" manner. It also claims in the Bleakney statement of defence that despite all efforts Woodard was unable to avoid the collision.

In both statements, the city claims that it was not responsible for the design, maintenance, inspection or repair of the train tracks, the train crossing warning system, the train speed, the crossing bells, barricades or crossing signals. The city also says it complied with all instructions, orders and directives from Via Rail and Transport Canada with regard to the crossing and had no jurisdiction or authority to unilaterally alter the crossing.

It also alleges that the roadway design, signage, maintenance and traffic flow systems that are within the city's jurisdiction were the result of policy decisions exercised in good faith.

In both, the city says the "negligence of Via Rail and/or the operators of the Via Rail train" was a contributing cause of the collision.

But in the statement of defence to the Bleakney lawsuit, the city goes further, alleging that if Woodard didn't see or hear the approaching train, it was due to the negligence of the railway responsible for the track.

The city's position in the legal documents is at odds with a preliminary Transportation Safety Board report that indicated driver distraction and speed may have been factors in the deadly crash.

While Via Rail is still "familiarizing itself" with the city's court submission, "what we know is that the preliminary report following the investigation of the Transport Safety Board of Canada did not identify issues related to the train operation, the crossing signals or the tracks," according to an emailed statement from a Via official.

The safety board said it did not identify any issues with the operation of the train, the operation of the crossing signals or the condition of the track.

The crash investigators also stressed it would be wrong to assume there were only two factors that could have contributed to the collision and said their investigation is continuing.

The statements of defence recognize that reality, saying that the investigation into the collision is ongoing and "that the full particulars of the facts and circumstances surrounding the collision are unknown to them at this time."

As part of its defence, the city states that it maintained a reasonable system of inspection and maintenance of OC Transpo vehicles. The city denies there were any defects in the bus, but if there were, alleges it was the result of a "hidden or latent manufacturing defect or negligence" on the part of the bus manufacturer.

The city further suggests that any judgment against it should be reduced by the amount of insurance benefits paid to the plaintiffs. The city also asks that it be released from any benefits the plaintiffs may receive from statutory accident benefits under an income continuation benefit plan, pension plan or sick leave plan.

The lawyer for passenger Rob More's family said she wasn't surprised by anything in the city's legal filing.

"It's a very typical statement of defence for this type of action," said Éliane Lachaine, adding that it isn't unusual for a defendant to ask for a lawsuit to be dismissed.

Attempts to reach Via Rail and the lawyer for Bleakney's family were not immediately successful Monday.

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.



New lawsuit filed against city, Via Rail over crash

A new lawsuit has been filed against the city and Via Rail in the deadly crash between an OC Transpo bus and passenger train.

Passenger Carolyn Croteau alleges in a statement of claim filed Monday that she suffered broken ribs, leg lacerations, a concussion and head and neck pain after being thrown to the floor of the doubledecker bus after it hit the train on Sept. 18, 2013.

The collision between the No. 76 express bus and Via train at a level crossing near the Fallowfield transit station killed five passengers and bus driver David Woodard.

Croteau and her husband Dennis Croteau are suing for \$350,000 in damages.

Theirs is the 13th known lawsuit filed against the city since the crash.

The estate of driver Woodard is also named as a defendant.

In their statement of claim, the Croteaus accuse the city, Via Rail and Woodard of negligence.

None of the allegations has been proven in court. The city, VIA Rail and Woodard's estate have yet to respond to the lawsuit.

According to the statement of claim, Croteau continues to suffer from "psychological impairment" as a result of the crash, including flashbacks, difficulty sleeping, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The statement of claim alleges she has had to undergo therapy and treatment as a result.

**23/06/2015 Ottawa Sun Otrain**

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.

**Thursday 25/06/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Greenbank Road**

Council asks Via to stop whistles at Greenbank Road crossing

Barrhaven could soon be a lot quieter now that council has agreed to formally ask Via Rail trains to stop blowing whistles at the Greenbank Road crossing, where a temporary detour has been set up as part of a multi-year construction project.

The former Nepean council passed a bylaw 30 years ago to prohibit train whistling at the crossing, but after the detour opened earlier this year, Via recommended trains blow their whistles due to the shift of Greenbank Road. The construction includes widening the road and building a new grade-separated crossing.

Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder says the whistle now blows more than a dozen times a day and can be heard by thousands of people who live nearby, which is why she asked council to request an end to the practice until the construction project is completed at the end of 2017.

Via has said it would obey council's wishes so long as the city provided public notice of its intention to ban train whistles at the location.

A safety assessment reviewed by the city and Via confirms that whistling is not legally required at the temporary road detour on Greenbank.

Yet that wasn't enough to persuade Mayor Jim Watson, who, along with five councillors, dissented.

He said he was opting to err on the side of public safety because the area is confusing due to the changes in Greenbank's road alignment.

Another lawsuit in fatal bus-train collision

The family of a 21-year-old who died in September 2013 when an OC Transpo bus was hit by a Via Rail train in Barrhaven has become the latest to file a lawsuit against the City of Ottawa, Via Rail, train conductor Kevin McCardle and the estate of the deceased driver of the bus, David Woodard.

Parents Cynthia and Richard Nash, and Geoffrey Nash, the younger brother of the victim, Kyle Nash, filed suit on June 30, alleging that the defendants were negligent in their duties to properly protect the passengers in their care or to prevent the crash from occurring.

It's the first time McCardle, the train conductor, has been named in a lawsuit regarding the bus crash.

There have been 13 other known lawsuits filed against the city making similar allegations.

The City of Ottawa has maintained that there was never any negligence, breach of duty or want of care on its part in relation to the collision between a Via Rail train and an OC Transpo bus, No. 76 Express, in September 2013 at a level crossing on the Transitway near the Fallowfield station.

The crash killed Nash and fellow passengers Michael Bleakney, Karen Krzyzewski, Connor Boyd and Rob More, as well as Woodard, the bus driver. Dozens of others were injured.

The Nash family alleges that Woodard, the driver, didn't keep a proper lookout, was driving dangerously, was distracted and/ or impaired and was insufficiently trained.

They also say the City of Ottawa didn't adequately ensure the safety of the rail crossing along the Transitway and allowed Woodard, whom they allege was in no condition to do so, to drive the bus.

The plaintiffs say McCardle was underqualified to drive the train, which the plaintiffs allege was not in proper condition, and failed to brake in time to avoid the collision.

Finally, the lawsuit calls on Via Rail for allegedly not warning its conductors to slow down and blow the train's whistle when approaching a railway crossing, and for failing to maintain the railway crossing, along with other allegations similar to those levelled against the conductor.

The Nash family is suing for more than \$675,000 in total damages.

According to the statement of claim, Cynthia Nash has chronic post-traumatic stress and depression, including flashbacks, as the result of her son's death. The statement alleges that it has affected her work with the federal public service, which may force her into early retirement.

Geoffrey Nash was unable to return to his post-secondary school in the wake of his younger brother's death, delaying his education by a year, according to the statement of claim.

None of the allegations has been proven in court. The defendants have 20 days to respond to the lawsuit.

**Thursday 16/07/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Greenbank Road**

Via to silence train whistle in Barrhaven

Via Rail has blown the whistle on blowing the whistle in Barrhaven. Passenger trains will no longer whistle at the Greenbank Road crossing as of this Saturday at 12:01 a.m., the rail company announced Wednesday. The move comes nearly a month after Ottawa city council agreed to formally ask that Via Rail trains to stop blowing whistles at the crossing, where a temporary detour has been set up as part of a multi-year construction project. Barrhaven Coun. Jan Harder said last month that the whistle was blowing more than a dozen times a day and could be heard by thousands of people who live nearby, which is why she asked council to request an end to the practice until the construction project is completed at the end of 2017. In a statement, Via has said it was altering the practice out of respect for council's wishes. A safety assessment reviewed by the city and Via confirmed that whistling is not legally required at the temporary road detour on Greenbank.

**Friday 14/08/2015 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls Fallowfield Road**

Via Rail has filed a \$4.2-million lawsuit against the City of Ottawa for damages to the train, tracks and injuries to their engineers after a deadly crash between an OC Transpo bus and one of their trains.

In the lawsuit, Via Rail alleges that city negligence is to blame for the crash between a Route 76 express bus and a Toronto-bound train near the Fallowfield Transitway station on the morning of Sept. 18, 2013.

The crash killed five passengers and bus driver David Woodard.

A preliminary investigation by the Transportation Safety Board concluded Woodard was driving above the speed limit and failed to stop for the warning lights and rail-lowered crossing arms before hitting the side of the train. The TSB also noted that video screens in the driver's area designed to allow Woodard to monitor passengers may have momentarily distracted him.

Among Via's allegations are that the city failed to ensure bus drivers reduced their speed upon approaching the railway crossing, failed to ensure the speed limit on the Transitway was adequate given the curve in the road before the tracks, and knew or ought to have known that the configuration of the Transitway was dangerous.

"Via Rail incurred significant business losses relating to the loss of use of its rolling stock involved in the collision and disruption to its passenger service," the lawsuit alleged.

The city previously accused Via Rail of negligence when it filed a third-party claim against the railway in a response to lawsuits filed by two of the victims' families. The city alleged in those claims that Via trains were approaching the crossing too fast and failed to implement adequate warning systems.

None of the allegations in either lawsuit have been proven in court. The city has yet to file a statement of defence to Via's claim.

Via is seeking \$4 million in damages from the city and the estate of driver Woodard for losses to their business and damage to the train and tracks and crossing.

They are also seeking to fully recover benefit payments made under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to engineers Kevin McCardle and Gregory McGrath, both of whom were injured and unable to return to work following the collision.

The lawsuit claimed \$142,841.12 in relation to McCardle and \$70,465.58 in relation to McGrath.

It is the 26th known lawsuit filed against the city since the crash.