

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2020

02/01/2020 CBC News

Otrain

Dirty Train Roofs Caused New Year's Eve LRT Delays

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

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

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

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

A Little Frustrating

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

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

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

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

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

New Problem

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

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

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

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

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

Kate Porter.

16/01/2020 CBC News

Otrain

LRT Could be Halted Until Friday

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consider Working from Home

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

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

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

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

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

17/01/2020 CBC News

Otrain

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CBC Not Yet Shared

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

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

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

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

OC Transpo Trains Damaged in Collision at Belfast Yard

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26/03/2020

Ottawa Citizen

Kingston (CN)

Prescott

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20/04/2020

RT&S

Otrain

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.

Spieler 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," Spieler says.

Spieler 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," Spieler 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," Spieler describes.

The total trip consists of three short double-track segments where trains meet, and Spieler 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," Spieler claims.

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.

15/05/2020 Ottawa Citizen Kingston (CN) Cardinal

An unidentified Prescott man was pronounced dead at the scene after being struck by a train on the CN Railway line in South Dundas Township. Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry OPP officers responded to the tracks near Marine Station Road east of Cardinal just before 11 a.m. Tuesday, police said in a release Thursday. No foul play is suspected in the death of the 54-year old man.

06/08/2020 Cornwall Freeholder Winchester

Winchester Ontario - If you've driven past any part of the Canadian Pacific (CP) rail line in North Dundas recently, you may have seen some changes, including a track being removed.
 CP, which constructed and has operated the line since the mid-1880s, is upgrading a 100 kilometre section of its railroad line between Smiths Falls and Dorion, Quebec.
 The line is part of the company's Toronto-Montreal and transcontinental routes.
 "CP is continuously looking for opportunities to improve its track infrastructure," said Andy Cummings, media relations manager for the company.
 The project involves removing one track of the Smiths Falls-Dorion line, known as the CP Winchester Subdivision, and installing four long passing sidings. Those sidings are located between Merrickville-Kemptville, Inkerman-Winchester, Finch-Avonmore, and Apple Hill-Green Valley.
 CP crews began working on the project in early 2020 preparing the site for the upgrades, which include considerable track-work and changes to grade crossings. In addition to track-work changes, the railroad is replacing a nearly 100-year-old signal system with a new Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) system.
 The decommissioned second track sections are being removed for reuse.
 "CP plans to redeploy the quality track materials elsewhere on CP property," Cummings said.
 The company is also in the process of integrating and upgrading a newly-purchased rail line between St. Jean, Quebec, and Bangor, Maine.
 "This project will create a safer, more efficient, rail network," he added.
 Cummings did not provide a specific cost for this upgrade, or if existing customers on the line will see any impact to service.
 The project is expected to be completed by early 2021.

14/09/2020 Brockville Recorder Kingston (CN) Brockville

Flashing at Train Station
 Brockville Ontario - Brockville police charged a 31-year-old man with mischief, indecent acts, and breach of probation on Friday in connection with a flashing incident at the city's train station.
 At 15:45 city police responded to complaints about a man causing a disturbance at the VIA Rail station.
 The man had allegedly exposed himself to the public and continued to yell and scream, according to a police news release.
 He was arrested, charged, given a court date, and released.

With picture of Tony Humphries

Retired Locomotive Engineer Reveals Realities of Railway Accidents

Smiths Falls Ontario - "He was looking right at my face when I hit him."

Tony Humphrey, a retired locomotive engineer who lives in Smiths Falls, vividly remembers the sunny, summer day when the train he was riding in struck and killed a man at a railway crossing just outside of Merrickville in the mid-1970s.

The man was a passenger in a grey Dodge pickup truck.

The driver survived.

Humphrey said he saw the truck driving up to the crossing.

It didn't stop.

"I was the only one who saw him. He was looking at me. His face was almost grey-white and he's looking right at me. It's just a realization, he had a split second to live, and he knew it," Humphrey said of the man who died.

That face is still in Humphrey's mind's eye today.

The train stopped about a half-mile up the track after the collision.

When Humphrey jumped off the train to check out the scene with his conductor, they noticed baby clothes in the cab of the truck.

So, they began to search the ditches.

"We're looking for the baby. That was pretty traumatic," said Humphrey.

Ultimately, Humphrey learned that there had been no baby in the truck, only the clothes.

This was the first and worst railway accident in which Humphrey was involved during his career with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) that lasted over 35 years.

At that time, Humphrey didn't seek counselling, an option that he said wasn't provided back then.

Humphrey wasn't driving the train that day, but it didn't matter.

Being there on the trainman's side, watching the event unfold, was impactful.

It wasn't until another incident around the late 1980s, early 1990s, that Humphrey did seek counselling.

This time, he was driving.

On an overcast winter day, the kind of day with steel grey skies, Humphrey's train struck a female driver in Carleton Place.

"This lady drove in front of me and I hit her. It was right before the Mississippi River. The car's heading for the river and there's something called a signal staff sitting there. The car hit the signal staff, or she would have been in the water," he said.

After the collision, Humphrey walked back to see if he could help.

He knew one of the Ontario Provincial Police officers on the scene.

"You kind of assume the worst," said Humphrey.

But, he said, one of the police officers called him around 22:00 on the night of the accident to tell him the woman was going to survive, a relief.

After that incident, Humphrey said he took the option to seek counselling where he ended up spending two sessions going back to reflect on the fatality Humphrey was involved in the 1970s.

"I'd been carrying that baggage for all those years," he said.

Humphrey said he was glad he took the opportunity to speak with someone.

"Some of the older guys used to laugh about it. You're not less of a man because you go to counselling," Humphrey affirmed.

Humphrey explained that being involved in a railway accident affects all people differently.

"Sometimes they never get on a train again. When you think about, an accident that killed one two, three, sometimes 10 people. It's an occurrence that's traumatic," he said.

Humphrey encourages other engineers who have been involved in railway accidents to speak to someone as there are resources available, a change from when he was first on the railroad.

"There's a better thinking around, it's not a sign of weakness to get counselling," he said, adding that companies are taking mental health more seriously now and have changed policies to give those involved in railway accidents support.

Despite the traumatic experiences that many encounter, Humphrey didn't lose his passion for the railroad.

He remembers his time working on the railroad in eastern Ontario fondly.

He recalls racing through the countryside with an unimaginable power of the locomotive propelling him down the track.

"My favourite run was up to Chalk River. The nature, oh, my goodness. Going from Pakenham up through to Renfrew, wonderful, beautiful, country along the Ottawa River going through these beautiful scenic towns," he said.

While there's magic and beauty in the railroading world, it also teaches you to respect the power and might of locomotives.

It's something Humphrey, as someone who has seen the results of railway accidents first-hand, wants people to understand.

It isn't uncommon to be involved in a traumatic incident on the railroad.

"You kind of figure when you go into it, it's like going to war. There's a good chance it's going to happen to you," he said.

But, Humphrey explains, fatalities on the railway are not as common as near misses.

"There's a lot of near misses," he said.

Humphrey estimates that he might see one near-miss a week.

Despite the numerous instances Humphrey has seen, including school buses racing across tracks, there's one near-miss that sticks out for Humphrey.

In the mid-1980s, Humphrey almost killed a young woman and three young children in Arnpryor.

"She had a purple Duster. I missed her by mere inches. I don't think she even knew. She never stopped, she drove right in front of me," he said.

As Humphrey continued down the track, with his hand on the emergency brake, he saw three small children looking back at him.

"I thought, I just about killed you. I can still see those three little kids in the back looking up at me," he said.

Humphrey said as an engineer there is not much that can be done when a driver cuts in front of a train.

Stopping quickly is not an option.

"You're in the cab, when someone drives in front of you. or stands in front of you, you're completely helpless. I'm doing 60 miles an hour, I've got 10 to 15,000 tonnes behind me. I can't stop. What do I feel, bang. That's it. It's pretty helpless. There's nothing I can do," he said.

Humphrey said people need to be more cautious and vigilant around train tracks to avoid railway accidents, incidents he said, are largely preventable.

"We say they're accidents, but no, it's just carelessness. It's inattentiveness and carelessness. They are certainly preventable," he said.

It's something Operation Lifesaver agrees with.

Operation Lifesaver is an organization that works with the rail industry, governments, law enforcement, labour groups, the media, and other organizations and communities to increase awareness about rail safety.

"Operation Lifesaver believes that every rail crossing, and trespassing incident is preventable, but it takes individuals and communities working in partnership with organizations like ours to prevent them from happening," said Sarah Mayes, Operation Lifesaver's national director.

"People think these incidents won't happen to them, until they do. It only takes a split-second of inattention at a crossing, or an unsafe choice (such as using tracks as a shortcut or a recreational path) to change your life, and that of your loved ones, forever."

Mayes reports that on average there are 60 fatalities each year stemming from railway crossing and trespassing incidents on federally-regulated railways, a number based on data from the Transportation Safety Board (TSB) of Canada from 2015-2019.

Canadian National Railway (CN) reports that each year more than 2,100 North Americans are killed or seriously injured in rail crossing and trespassing incidents.

Mayes said the TSB doesn't publicly report on the causes of rail incidents unless they do an investigation into an incident.

However, Mayes did outline the common causes of railway accidents.

She said crossing incidents can be as a result of distraction (for example, people not hearing or seeing oncoming trains at a crossing because they're distracted by music or their phones), people driving around lowered gates at a crossing, or generally not obeying the railway signs and signals.

Mayes also points out that people trying to beat a train to a crossing are the cause of railway accidents, too.

Her tip to drivers, you can't beat the train.

"An optical illusion makes trains appear to be further away and travelling more slowly than they are," she said.

Mayes explained that trespassing incidents can result from people using tracks as a shortcut or a recreational path (ex. people walking their dogs, or jogging, or riding a recreational vehicle along or beside the tracks, not realizing how quickly and quietly a train can sneak up on them, or that trains can overhang the rails), people taking photos on the tracks (for weddings, graduations or selfies), people climbing on rail equipment (ex. "train hopping" which is both illegal and extremely dangerous), and suicides.

As part of Rail Safety Week, which runs this year from 21-27 September, Operation Lifesaver has partnered with almost 30 different municipalities to install "Look. Listen. Live." decals on the pavement near rail crossings as part of their Community Safety Partnership Program.

The organization has also developed tool kits for municipalities and educators to share the rail safety message with communities and young people.

"We hope all of this will encourage Canadians to stay off the tracks, stay alert, and obey railway signs and signals at crossings, and ultimately result in fewer incidents," said Mayes.

Though Mayes couldn't speak to specific resources available for locomotive engineers who are involved in traumatic incidents, she said, "I know Canada's railways take the health and safety of their employees very seriously."

This newspaper reached out to VIA Rail about their Peer to Peer support program.

We have not yet received a response.

The newspaper reached out to CP, but were referred to Operation Lifesaver.

10/10/2020 Inside Ottawa Valley Belleville Perth

Perth Town Hall Staff to Study Train Whistle Issues

Perth Ontario - Other places may see examples of dog whistle politics, but Perth town council only ever seems to hear about train whistle politics.

In an 18 Sep 2020 email to Coun. Brock McPherson, resident Melody MacDonell wrote that "I would like the leadership in Perth to do something about the train blaring its horn every time it goes through town. There is no need to blast through crossings, all of which have lights and lowering guards. You can request a change by asking CP to refrain from doing so. It is simple and will make your beautiful town more peaceful."

That email was shared with town council during their committee of the whole meeting on Tuesday, 6 Oct 2020 and reminded Coun. Judy Brown, who was chairing the meeting, that "this has been an issue for a few years."

But she pointed out that "it's not as simple as asking the engineers to stop."

Coun. Leona Cameron said that when it comes to train whistles, "I hear it from my bedroom. I do enjoy hearing it."

At the same time, while "I love trains, I have a big fear of them as well. I still always have a little trepidation."

When it comes to sounding a train whistle at a crossing, "I would have to see the train whistles not go," said Deputy Mayor Ed McPherson, as a safety precaution.

Brown suggested that there be "an update on the current situation," that the letter be received for information, and that a staff report be prepared for the

November committee of the whole meeting.

03/11/2020 CBC News Smiths Falls

Pedestrian dies after being struck by train near Smiths Falls, Ont.

Ontario Provincial Police are investigating after a VIA Rail train struck and killed a 48-year-old man Friday near Smiths Falls, Ont.

Police said the incident took place at the railway tracks on Sturgess Road in the Township of Montague, east of Smiths Falls, at around 12:30 p.m.

The man died at the scene, police said.

Police reported that 92 passengers and six staff members were on board the train.

The train, number 53, was travelling between Ottawa and Toronto, VIA Rail wrote in a statement.

The agency said the train was delayed for four hours. The line has since been cleared but the incident delayed another eight trains between Ottawa and Toronto, according to the statement.

Township of Montague is approximately 70 kilometres southwest of Ottawa.

Cutting Ties by Craig Stevenson

A photo of the near past spurs thoughts of railway evolution at Bedell.

The view is enticingly familiar but largely gone—and it reflects a world that has changed immensely in a short span of time. This photograph of the Bedell rail junction surfaced recently on a social media page devoted to regional railway interests. It was taken on October 13, 1993, by railway photographer Michael Shufelt, a frequent visitor to the area in the 1990s.

Its emergence is timely. Bedell is changing, as is the Canadian Pacific line between Smiths Falls and Montreal. The signal system has been updated and the line has, along most of this distance, been reduced from a double to a single track. Bedell is also being cleansed of those remnants of its earlier life as a junction of rail lines that connected various eastern Ontario communities.

The photo looks east toward the junction and is taken from a vantage point on the south track not far from where Bedell Road now crosses the line. The road surface is still gravel, and the fringe of land between the road and the rail lines is not yet overgrown with brush.

The first two tracks on the left are the sidings for rail cars being taken to and from Ottawa. Here we see a local freight—the "Ottawa turn"—taking a string of cars off the siding, onto the mainline, and then turning onto the single track of the "Prescott subdivision". In the distance—and to the immediate left of the caboose at the rear of the train—the locomotives are approaching the level crossing where the track crosses Bedell. From there, the train will enter Kemptville to move a car or two at the line into the Co-op feed mill on Van Buren before continuing to Ottawa.

Rail freight between Bedell and Ottawa ceased in 1997, and this line is now the "rail trail" through Kemptville. Aside from remnant telegraph poles and scattered bits of rotting wooden ties, only the railbed itself reminds the trail walker of this pathway's previous life.

And those sidings to the rear of the caboose? Long out of freight service, CP parked maintenance-of-way equipment on them until last year, when they were severed from the main line as part of the current modernization project. In early November, the rails were lifted, leaving behind a scarred line of ties. The switch stand immediately behind the caboose is still in place, a small monument of sorts to the junction's past life.

Down the middle of the photo is a familiar sight—the County Rd 44 overpass—and a now-removed "crossover" track. The double-tracked mainline remains here, though technically the north (left) track is a passing siding, one of several between Smiths Falls and Montreal facilitating the passage of trains moving in opposing directions.

To the right, a line of boxcars occupies the nearest of two south siding tracks. This siding track remains as a parking spot for work trains operating in the area. The most notable feature here is the cantilever signal bridge looming over the line of cars. That signal bridge features in Bedell photos dating back to the era of the steam locomotive. It stood as a disused but notable landmark of the junction until early November, when it too was torn out. Its crumpled length currently lies at the edge of the Bedell yard.

Along the boxcar tops can be seen the crossarms of the old telegraph system, as dead to use then as they are now. Today, they are largely hidden by overgrowth. To their right, the turnoff to the old Prescott line remains in abbreviated form as a short industrial line south to Oxford Station.

The cumulative visual effect contrasts with what one sees at Bedell today. Aside from east-west mainline rail traffic, only the local train to Oxford Station allows the site to qualify as a junction of any sort. That reflects another story—one of broader technological and economic change. For as an economy goes, so goes the structure and scale of its supporting infrastructure.

So long as those vestiges of the past remained, it was possible to see the character of a world that has disappeared rapidly in the past two decades. The newly-scrubbed scene is one of technological efficiency, and a telling sign of an economy that has jumped up to a global scale. Today's Bedell is little more than a backdrop to a rail system connecting Montreal and Saint John to Toronto and Chicago and Vancouver.

This too has consequences. The realignment of the CP system also reflects the wave of de-industrialization that has swept eastern Ontario and beyond, producing economic dislocation, manufacturing unemployment, and much of the political turmoil characteristic of our age.

And in that, this view of an everyday scene is a revealing look at so much more than trains.