

Annual Public Meeting – Question and Answers

May 28, 2013

Capital Investment Program

1- What is the current strategy/timeline to complete the overhaul of the remaining LRC fleet?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

Currently we have six LRC economy cars in Moncton, which are being overhauled. These cars have an expected completion date of fall 2013. The renovation to 26 Business Class LRC cars is already underway. One of the new Business Class cars is complete and will be in service in June 2013. The remaining cars should be completed by mid-2014.

2- What is the target date to have the new Deluxe Class with the rebuilt sleeping car and park cars with larger bedrooms on the *Canadian* available for service?

VIA Rail is planning to start selling the new Deluxe Class on the *Canadian* in early fall 2013 for travel in summer 2014.

3- Will the Chateau Sleeping cars be renovated in the same way the Manor sleeping cars have been and when will they be in service?

Currently, eight (8) Chateau cars are part of VIA Rail's renovation projects and will be introduced into service in the spring of 2014 as part of the Luxury Sleeping Class service.

With regard to renovating the balance of the Chateau cars in the same way as we renovated the Manor cars, there are no confirmed plans for this yet.

4- Will VIA Rail ensure that there is equal access to passengers in wheelchairs who wish to purchase tickets and travel in VIA Business Class after the fleet is renovated?

Following the renovations, each renovated Business Class car will continue to include a wheelchair tie-down. There will be no change to the current access offered. These cars are also equipped with accessible washrooms.

Furthermore, persons reserving the wheelchair tie-down seat will continue to pay the regular Economy Class fare.

Any person requiring special services must advise VIA Rail when booking their ticket. A special service request must be made 48 hours in advance.

5- What are VIA's plans for Halifax as far as the Station and services are concerned?

Concerning the station, VIA Rail is in discussion with some potential investors for a development project of its property in the area surrounding the Halifax train station. We are seeking a partner that can work with us to leverage this important asset, which is currently under-utilized. We are looking for

a market-driven solution that will maximize service to our customers, pave the way for a future increase in our ridership and have a positive impact on the ongoing development of the greater Halifax region.

About our service, VIA Rail will continue to monitor traffic over the Montréal-Halifax route and make adjustments as required.

6- Why did you reduce the service where new stations were or will be built (like Windsor, Belleville and Brockville)?

Our commitment to serving our customers with even greater care has led us to develop projects like Windsor and Belleville stations. Last year's decision was the result of conscious considerations regarding ridership over the last few years. We reduced frequencies in markets where ridership was too low to justify the existing level of service. This allowed us to reallocate resources to markets where demand is high and growing, while maintaining an adequate level of service on all routes to meet customer needs. Adjustments made to our schedule last year addressed the needs of a larger number of people in terms of mobility. In fact, frequencies were added between Toronto and Montréal, as well as between Toronto and Ottawa, which benefited people travelling to and from Belleville.

In Windsor, the new station acts as a lever to realize the full potential of rail transport in the region. This new and modern building can accommodate up to 300 people and is fully accessible to people with reduced mobility. Moreover, the construction of the new station has created jobs and stimulated economic growth in the region.

Intermodal Partnerships

7- Has there been any marketing plan developed to increase ridership in rural Southwestern Ontario? Has VIA recognized and taken steps to ensure that (...) train service should be expanded (...)?

A plan is under development. We will wait for the back to school period for publishing advertisements in the area this next fall.

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Also, some services in Southwestern Ontario duplicated existing and planned commuter services of our local intermodal partners, GO Transit and Robert Q. At VIA Rail, we believe that our intermodal strategy, which aims at developing innovative solutions, will facilitate travel for Canadians while providing greater choice and optimizing use of the transportation system.

8- Approximately how much revenue was generated with the loan of VIA Rail – Canadian taxpayer funded equipment to Amtrak for the American Thanksgiving travel period?

VIA Rail was very proud to be able to help Amtrak and the citizens of New York and New Jersey following the disastrous impact of Hurricane Sandy. This assistance in turn helped New Jersey Transit. It occurred during VIA Rail's least busy time of the year and Amtrak's busiest.

VIA Rail received a nominal amount to cover its costs in lending the cars. When such events strike a partner rail operator, assistance is offered and given diligently. VIA Rail would expect no less from its partners, in similar circumstances.

Financial Results and Annual Report

9- Why does the map of Canada at the end of the *Outlook* chapter, on page 32 of VIA Rail's 2012 Annual Report, not show any train routes in the Maritimes and Western Canada?

The visuals used in the 2012 Annual Report were taken from various presentations and projects which took place over the course of 2012. This visual is meant to simplify the look and feel of the VIA Rail network. It is not meant to be an actual representation of the entire network.

10- Why (...) doesn't the Annual Report contain the cost data by route?

Cost data by route is available upon request.

10 dollar bill

11- Why was the VIA Rail logo removed from the locomotive on the new \$10 bill?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

This is what we refer to as an "artist rendition", where artists take some liberty in drafting their images. Despite the missing logo, the train on the new \$10 bill is unmistakably the *Canadian* as can be seen by the look (the paint and striping seen on the locomotive) as well as the backdrop of the Rockies.

12- Last year's meeting, when a question was asked about marketing VIA Rail services, specifically in Western Canada to Canadians, Chairman Paul Smith said the new \$10 bill will feature the *Canadian*. I would like to know approximately how much (1) passenger trips and (2) revenue this marketing has helped VIA Rail over the past year?

The new \$10 featuring VIA Rail's *Canadian* will be in circulation as of November 2013. Before that time, no results can be measured in association with its marketing value. For further information about our financial results, we invite you to have a look at our 2012 Annual Report and our 2013 First Quarter Report.

Annual Report: <http://www.viarail.ca/en/about-via-rail/our-company/annual-report>

Quarterly Reports: <http://www.viarail.ca/en/about-via-rail/our-company/quarterly-reports>

Customer service

13- In terms of customer service, will you be able to better train customer service representatives, increase the number of them, as well as the effectiveness of them? I made a complaint via e-mail and the post back in 2009, which up until this day, has still not been responded to. Telephone representatives are often unhelpful (with exceptions).

We are sorry that you feel you did not receive satisfactory customer service. Overall, our feedback has been very positive. We do customer surveys regularly to make sure we attain the high standards for customer service that we expect from our employees.

In fact, our last survey indicated that 81% of customers were happy with the customer service they received from VIA Rail.

To this end, we also continually reinforce empowerment with front line staff, encouraging them to show empathy and flexibility when appropriate. This is done through workshops, info sessions, guidelines and individual coaching. We continually strive to improve in this area.

As for an email complaint from 2009 that never received a response, it must have been either never received by us or lost, which rarely happens. We are sorry about this and hope that if you still have concerns you will re-send your request to us at customer_relations@viarail.ca.

14- VIA Rail should provide baggage service on all its trains. It should also provide a storage service for both passengers (for free, the same day of a journey, before or after the journey) and non-passengers (for a fee) for convenience.

Thank you for your suggestion. The baggage cars added to each train consist are a matter of supply and demand. Baggage cars are subject to availability and are therefore allocated on trains where the demand for baggage is high, such as long-haul routes.

Many of our stations already offer a Baggage Storage Check service for customers holding a ticket. This information can be found on viarail.ca.

Marketing and Sales

15- Is it possible to extend the half price special through summer this year?

Although we cannot publish in advance when our promotions and special offers will take place, we recommend that you follow us on Facebook and Twitter or register on our virtual community database (<https://www.viarail.ca/en/informative-e-letters-profile>) to get information about upcoming sales.

Also, we recommend that you join our VIA Préférence program to earn points toward free travel.

16- Why doesn't VIA Rail want to cater to students 26+ who hold a valid ISIC card (International Student Identity Card) nowadays?

We are happy to let you know that we do in fact accept an ISIC as entitlement for all youth fares including single tickets and passes.

17- At last year's Annual Public Meeting there was a question about previous meetings in Vancouver with domestic and American Tour Operators. It was asked when a tour operators meeting or focus group would take place in Vancouver again. Will future meetings for Tour Operators be organized as they were well attended in the past?

It is not in our short or medium-term plans to host general meetings for wholesalers. Most of the meetings we now hold are by conference call.

Governance

18- The Wikipedia article on VIA Rail states:

"It is hindered by the fact that it was created by an Order in Council of the Privy Council, and not from legislation passed by Parliament. If VIA were enabled by legislation, the company could be permitted to seek funding on the open money markets as other Crown corporations such as CN have done in the past." If true, what would be required to change it (...): authorization from the Privy Council or would Parliament be able to do something about this without waiting on the Privy Council to act? Could you confirm and elaborate on this?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

VIA Rail was formed by an order in council in 1977, there is currently no act of Parliament or statute to change any legislation associated with VIA Rail. That is a decision that belongs entirely to the federal government. It would be up to the Government of Canada to make such a policy decision. VIA Rail Canada is a non-agent Crown Corporation.

Service & operations

19- How do you explain your operational performance in terms of on-time departures and on-time arrivals?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

Over the last few years, we have concentrated our efforts on what we can really control. We focused on train departures from our major stations. In general, we are making good improvements, our on-time performance being at 80% right now.

- 95% of our trains leave on time
- 83% of our trains that leave on time arrive on time
- 40% of our trains that depart late arrive on time

Our goal is to reach an on-time performance of 85% and, eventually, get to 90%. The first quarter of 2013 was a challenging quarter: we had bad weather conditions during winter, snow storms, and a blockade in January on our line between Montréal and Toronto. We saw an improvement in May 2013 compared to May 2012, reaching a performance of 80% compared to 69% last year.

20- I was a daily commuter on the Toronto-Niagara Falls line and was very disappointed when VIA cut service to a line serving a major tourist destination. Many countries throughout the world have invested heavily in rail and use commuters to supplement ridership. Why is limited service the right solution for Canadian rail?

Thank you for your question. Those kinds of decisions are never easy to make. We are conscious that all changes we make have an impact on our passengers. Last year's decision was the result of conscious considerations regarding ridership over the last few years. We reduced frequencies in markets where ridership was too low to justify the existing level of service. This allowed us to reallocate resources to markets where demand is high and growing, while maintaining an adequate level of service on all routes to meet customer needs. Adjustments made to our schedule last year addressed the needs of a larger number of people in terms of mobility.

At that time, some services in Southwestern Ontario, like on the Toronto-Niagara Falls line, duplicated existing and planned commuter services of our intermodal partner, GO Transit. At VIA Rail, we believe that our intermodal strategy, which aims at developing innovative solutions, will facilitate travel for Canadians while providing greater choice and optimizing use of the transportation system.

For more information, please visit our website at:

Information about intermodal partnerships on viarail.ca: viarail.ca/en/travel-info/transport-services/intermodality/overview;

Media release VIA Rail honoured at the 2013 Global AirRail Awards: viarail.ca/en/about-via-rail/media-room/latest-news/62485/22-may-2013-via-rail-wins-airrail-concept-year-award-glo.

21- Why isn't possible to buy a ticket at an intermediate station for train #650 and then transfer to #68 in Kingston?

Connecting time in Kingston (11 minutes) is not sufficient to allow a guaranteed connection from train #650 to train #68 on Fridays.

22- Why were connections from Montréal and Ottawa (trains #45 and #645) removed and why do they now start in Ottawa?

We are continuously working at improving the connecting time for the train from Montréal to Ottawa. In this case, when we created the direct train Québec - Montréal - Ottawa, we had to make schedule adjustments to accommodate travellers wanting to be in Ottawa earlier.

23- Concerning Québec City to intermediate points between Montréal and Toronto, why is there now only one train a day departing Québec City? Why does the afternoon train from Québec City arrive in Montréal 10 minutes after train #65 has departed?

When the schedule was last updated (in December 2012), we improved the service creating a Québec City – Toronto schedule connection with train #25 (Québec city - Montréal) and train #67 (Montréal - Toronto).

24- Did VIA consider returning to providing daily passenger rail service with shorter trains, catering to the multitude of movements between the many pairs of communities along its route both in Eastern and Western Canada?

VIA Rail's mandate is to serve Canadians and to provide them safe, efficient and cost-effective passenger transportation. Intercity, regional and transcontinental trains are part of our business model, which has shown good results since the Corporation was created.

25- Could the new Ottawa - Québec City service serve as a model for rescheduling trains #70/60 and trains #57/75 to reduce equipment dwell time in Toronto, making a Windsor - Montréal or London - Kingston journey an hour faster and more competitive?

Thank you for your suggestion, we are continuously looking at improving our schedules including connecting trains to improve our customers' travel experience.

26- What steps is VIA Rail taking to establish a high-speed train between Montréal – Québec City, and Québec City - Toronto? What is the timeline of this project? Does VIA Rail have plans to begin the development of high-speed trains throughout Canada (notably, on the Québec City - Windsor corridor and towards Boston and New York)? How can clients/citizens positively influence or further this project?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

This decision is not ours to make. It is entirely the purview of the federal government to decide on such matters. If ever they decided to go in that direction, VIA Rail would expect to be part of its implementation.

As a community, there is one question to ask ourselves. This question is: "Are we ready to abandon the car in favor of the train?" We believe so. With the improvements VIA Rail is bringing to travel time and schedules, and because the train in Canada is a way to make travel time useful and productive, all conditions are met to switch from a car culture to a culture of the train.

27- There have been efforts to create commuter rail for the area between Ottawa and the Outaouais, Pontiac and Eastern Ontario. Could you see VIA Rail getting involved in this effort?

VIA Rail is not in the commuter service. Our focus is intercity travelling for distances between 160 km and 800 km. This is part of our business model. However, we continue to work with our partners to improve intermodality within the area.

28- Why does train #1 arrive in Jasper 15 minutes after train #5 has left on Fridays and Sundays – and one has to wait two or three days for the next train #5 if making connections from the East?

When consulting our customer base surveys, it is clear that the passengers from train #1 to train #5 prefer a layover in Jasper compared to same day connection.

29- On the Thursday before Good Friday, (...) why did VIA Rail [cancel] train #650 as well as train #68, which normally operate on Fridays (...)?

Every Holiday weekend, we review our schedule, analyze the demand and make adjustments to offer more availability to our passengers on busier trains. By doing so, we unfortunately have to cancel the low demand trains.

30- Is VIA bringing back the early morning train from St. Marys to Toronto (550 am) and the late train from Toronto (10 p.m.) to St. Marys this year?

VIA Rail has no current plan to reinstate these frequencies.

31- When will VIA resume train service on Vancouver Island? What is the hold up for the agreement to resume this service (...)?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

VIA Rail had to stop service along this route because the tracks were deemed unsafe both by VIA as well as other authorities. We stated at the time that we would resume service as soon as the track was brought back to safe operating standards and that is still our intent.

The parties involved have the ability to restart the trans-service agreement that was in place at the time. However, if that train service agreement needs to be modified in any way, it will require resources that VIA Rail does not have at this time.

32- When will we be able to transport our car with us when taking the train?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

With our new inter-modal strategy, we are working toward a future in which travel will be so convenient and efficient that people won't need to use a car at all! We don't have any plans at this time for a train that will transport cars, but we aren't closing the door on this possibility altogether.

33- Why does VIA not operate the Canadian on CP tracks in Ontario? Can VIA negotiate operating the *Canadian* to North Bay, taking over from The Northlander, and then continue on to Sudbury and points West?

VIA Rail doesn't have operating agreements with Canadian Pacific (CP) through Northern Ontario. We operate mainly on CN lines on routes West of Toronto - except for a small portion on CP lines - for directional running. This means that all trains running East operate on CN lines and, for a short distance, all trains running West operate on CP lines. We are always looking for opportunities, but because we don't own the infrastructure, changing our routes is not as simple as it may seem.

34- How is the signalization project on the northern mainline between Guelph and London coming?

This question was answered during the APM, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube Channel](#).

This project is progressing as planned with a target completion date within 2014.

35- What can Canadian Citizens do to encourage the government to bring back the 3rd frequency of the *Canadian* to off season so Canadian taxpayers money is not wasted refurbishing the cars to sit in storage during the winter months?

Canadian citizens are encouraged to support their national railway by travelling as much as they can and promoting this great service to friends and relatives.

So far, numbers show that the strategy to reduce frequencies on the *Canadian* has paid off as we are carrying even more passengers in the off peak season than we did in previous years. Results from the last quarter of 2012 demonstrate that we are now offering the frequency that the market can bear and we significantly improved our return on investment while at the same time, delivering better value to tax payers. The strategy also brings other advantages, like allowing us to perform maintenance and upgrades on our equipment when it is not being used. It is more cost effective and a better use of public funds to store some equipment for a few months than to run it at a loss. We can then run more cars in better condition in peak season when market demand is greater.

36- Is it possible to operate four trains per week on the *Canadian* during peak season between Winnipeg and Vancouver? Four shorter trains are easier to operate than three very long trains.

Our schedules are determined based on our customers' needs. Latest results in terms of performance of the service the *Canadian* prove that our efforts to optimize the use of our resources and adjust our services to the market demand are working well. During the fourth quarter of 2012, the occupancy rate of this service reached 67% in November and December 2012, compared to 58% for the same period in 2011. The average number of passengers per train improved and reached 168 passengers on average in 2012, up from 148 in 2011. In 2012, this service saw a 4.2% increase of its passenger-miles (the total number of miles travelled by all passengers) compared to 2011.