



2019 ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This document contains answers to the most-asked questions sent to VIA Rail leading up to and during the 2019 Annual Public Meeting webcast. Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting and sent us their questions.

Please note that questions of the same nature have been grouped together. Grammar and syntax of the questions received have been corrected.

The Annual Public Meeting webcast is available to watch, in English and in French, [on VIA Rail's YouTube channel](#).

Governance

Has there been any interest in forming a public-private partnership to add extra capital to your operations?

VIA Rail was created by an Order in Council in 1977 as a Crown Corporation with non-agent status.

While this question has been debated in Parliament a few times over the last 30 years, there has been no resolution to date.

Enabling legislation would allow the Government of Canada to clarify VIA Rail's mandate and modify our status to allow for joint ventures, financial partnerships with the private sector, and diversity funding sources to grow the business.

In the meantime, VIA Rail's corporate powers to borrow, finance, create subsidiaries or allow third party investment are subject to the approval of the Minister of Finance.

How can I apply to become a member of VIA Rail's Board of Directors?

Go to "The Director of a Crown Corporation" section on the Government of Canada website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/guidance-crown-corporations/directors-crown-corporations-introductory-guide-roles-responsibilities.html>

Why do you have rear-facing seats on the train? Are there any plans to make all seats forward facing?

Will the new equipment have seating that can be rotated so that all seats are forward facing?

The 50/50 seating configuration in our bi-directional trains allows VIA Rail to operate more efficiently and is the standard for commuter and intercity trains globally. Our new Corridor fleet, like our newly renovated HEP cars, will be equipped with bi-directional seating. This 50/50 configuration means that trains no longer need to be turned around at destination, which is a big time-saving measure and provides VIA Rail with more flexibility when planning our train schedules and the potential to add more frequencies.

Are any substantial improvements being planned for your mobile apps?

We will develop a new mobile app with enhanced features once our new reservation system is implemented. Until then, we will make some improvements to the current app in terms of look and user experience.

How about a public transit app for VIA Rail?

VIA Rail has schedules published in the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) format available for developers in the [Developer Resources](#) page of its web site.

Would it be possible to equip closed (unstaffed) stations with at least one bathroom for passengers?

Unstaffed stations offer basic utility services, such as bathrooms. The stations are equipped with a mechanism that automatically opens doors 45 minutes before the train is expected to arrive. The doors close 30 minutes after the train has left the station.

However, stops that consist solely of shelters do not usually have utility services.

Why don't you offer travel packages similar to airlines (hotel-car rental)?

VIA Rail works with great partners who do package VIA Rail trips with other aspects of travel like hotels, sightseeing, etc, all across Canada. These packages are offered on the VIA Rail website. In the [Fares and Products](#) section, choose "Train Packages".

On trips to Halifax I have enjoyed the musicians on board the *Ocean*. VIA Rail should be applauded for showcasing Canadian talent. Could this initiative be expanded to include other performers, Canadian movies, and displays of current Canadian artists?

We are glad you enjoyed the artist on board your train. This Artist on Board program is runs on our long-distance trains from Montreal – Halifax as well as from Toronto-Vancouver. For passengers travelling in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor, we offer a variety of Canadian programming for viewing, through our On-Train Entertainment system. Due to space limitations and train movements, it is not possible to display physical art on board the trains.

Snow removal should be improved at the Ottawa station. Why else are we paying \$18 a day on parking?

Why is parking so expensive at the Ottawa station on Tremblay Road. Parking there costs \$18 a day, while it's free at the Fallowfield station, just a little further away.

VIA Rail manages price increases, usually according to neighbouring paid parking lots and ridership. The Fallowfield station also has paid parking, and the rates are determined on the same basis. As for snow removal, we do our best to ensure the parking lot is thoroughly cleaned, considering our parking spots are never empty at the end of the day. Regular monitoring is conducted during heavy snowfall. Nonetheless, we encourage users to report any problematic situation to station staff, who will relay the information to the snow removal contractor.

VIA Préférence

Why doesn't VIA Rail have rewards with other travel partners (Amtrak, SNCF, special trains such as the NAPA wine train) or Hotel partners?

We continue to look at program expansion opportunities that include partner redemptions but there are no plans to expand redemption at this time. The value members receive from the program is highly competitive with other loyalty and travel loyalty programs.

Why don't you reduce reward requirements for top tier members as the airlines do or offer special benefits?

Top tier members accumulate points faster (2x or 3x base points) allowing them to get rewards faster.

Why do you never have sales or point incentive events for Business class clients?

We often include Business class point offers exclusive to VIA Préférence members in our quarterly e-newsletters. These point offers can also be found on the VIA Préférence Offers page at <https://www.viapreference.com/en/offers>).

I have over 650 points saved up but I'm not sure how many points I need for travel. How can I find out?

Our reward chart, which includes information about the number of points needed for each trip, can be found in the Redeeming section of our website (www.viapreference.com/en/redeeming).

Why does it "cost" more VIA Preference points to travel from Windsor than most other places in Ontario? Why isn't there "points parity"? E.g., Toronto-Montreal requires 1,125 Points; Windsor-Toronto requires 2,425 Points - more than double! - even though it's a shorter distance.

The number of points required to travel is based on the class of service and the expected duration of the trip. Using your example, 1,125 points are required to travel from Toronto to Montreal in Economy class while 2,425 points are needed to travel between Windsor and Toronto in Business class. Both routes require

the same amount of points - for the same class of service - as they both fall into the long-distance category (3.5 hours and more). Information about points needed for travel can be found in the redemption grid [here](#).

Ocean / East

Do you plan to restore 6 day per week service to Halifax?

Will VIA be adding trips to the *Ocean* since the service reduction that was made in 2012? VIA has done extra trains during the Christmas season for the *Ocean*, what about during the summer months?

Regarding service in the east, the infrastructures on which VIA Rail operates are owned by third parties. VIA Rail continues to work with not only the infrastructure owners, but various stakeholders to evaluate options to improve train services in Eastern Canada.

Will you operate extra runs of the *Ocean* for Christmas 2019, as you did for 2014 to 2017, but not 2018?

There will be no extra frequencies in 2019. Schedules are being adjusted to better suit anticipated travel patterns and demand. VIA Rail will endeavour to maximize the available number of seats and sleepers on each train where demand warrants.

The schedule for the 2019 Holiday season has been created and is available for reservation.

Although the tracks are the responsibility of the track owner, the Newcastle Subdivision in New Brunswick [not owned by VIA Rail] causes major problems to the *Ocean's* efficiency. When will an agreement be reached to upgrade the tracks between Campbellton and Moncton and improve efficiency?

Upgrades and maintenance of the railway is the responsibility of the track owner and not based on an agreement. For this 40-mile-long section of track, considerable funding would be needed to carry out the overhaul. Track owners

upgrade the railway when time and funding allow, unless there are safety concerns, which are an immediate priority.

When will the Halifax – Moncton – Campbellton daily regional train service become a reality?

VIA Rail remains committed to serving communities and to improving services in the East. Infrastructure upgrades, however, are a critical prerequisite to proceeding with this project if VIA Rail is to meet customer expectations. The project has not evolved as quickly as VIA Rail and our communities would have hoped but for the moment it does not anticipate modifications to the service in the East.

What is the status of VIA Rail's proposal to run commuter trains in Halifax?

The Halifax regional council voted unanimously not to pursue the project further due to infrastructure requirements and associated financial implications.

According to the latest corporate plan, VIA will lose access to the loop at Halterm in Halifax by November 2020. This will remove the ability to turn the equipment for the *Ocean*. What are VIA Rail's plans to ensure that *Ocean* service can continue past that date? Is there another option to turn the train, or will a new equipment setup be used?

The agreement with Halterm is effective until November 1, 2020 and we are confident that we will have an operational plan in place to continue to provide our regular Eastern services to our customers by that date.

Current trains going east from Montreal to Halifax are in need of some improvements. Is there any plan to renew the fleet used on the *Ocean*?

In Budgets 2017 and 2018, the Government of Canada provided funds for the renovations of our long-distance trains. As a result, we expect renovated cars to make their way onto our various routes outside of the Corridor - including the *Ocean* – in the coming years.

Canadian / West

Is there consideration of moving the *Canadian* from the Canadian National to the Canadian Pacific between Toronto and Winnipeg?

What is being done to improve the on-time performance of The *Canadian*? Is any lobbying being done to get the government to pass legislation requiring CN to improve performance? Or move back to the CP route?

VIA Rail operates primarily on CN lines on routes west of Toronto (except for a small portion running on CP lines) and the CN line runs north of the Great Lakes. We are always looking for opportunities to improve our services, but it is difficult to change our routes because of our desire to continue to serve the needs of the communities along our current route, and those of the crews and depot locations. As well, changes such as these are based on negotiations with the infrastructure owners.

When will VIA Rail start to provide more services to Albertans? While cities in the East have train stations and schedules, western Canada is underrepresented.

Are there any efforts to implement Calgary - Edmonton service?

VIA Rail is committed to working with local communities to better understand the needs of travellers and to development plans that promote better service and modern intercity rail. At this time, VIA Rail does not have plans to serve the Calgary- Edmonton corridor.

With Greyhound no longer offering service to Western Canada is there anyway VIA Rail could help? Eg. Vancouver-Kamloops or Edmonton-Calgary and maybe Winnipeg-Regina?

We understand the negative impact that this situation has on the communities in Western Canada. We are always interested in exploring new routes, unfortunately, at this time we don't have the resources needed to expand our services. We serve more than 130 communities in Western Canada. To many of those communities VIA Rail provides an essential service and we remain committed to the communities that we serve.

What is being done to improve the frequency and reliability of the *Canadian*?

The challenging operational environment in which we operate our Western service the *Canadian* is an important concern for us and we take this situation very seriously. In the past few years, we have tried to find solutions to reduce the negative impact this situation has on our customers, our employees and our costs. We will continue to work in collaboration with the infrastructure owners to find a sustainable solution.

In the last couple of years, we have been adjusting and adapting the *Canadian's* schedule to mitigate the effects of delays. Several factors were considered: predictability, daylight while travelling through the Rockies, as well as maintenance and servicing in Vancouver and Toronto.

At the end of April, we introduced the current schedule of the *Canadian* - two (2) weekly national trains operating between Toronto and Vancouver and one (1) weekly train operating between Vancouver and Edmonton - in order to stabilize the market and create a more predictable schedule.

While we stated during the Annual Public Meeting that we intended to restore the third full frequency between Vancouver and Toronto in the Spring of 2020, subsequent consultations with our key stakeholders, including the infrastructure owner, led to a decision to maintain the current schedule in 2020 in order to offer a reliable service and the best customer experience possible.

High Frequency Rail/Corridor

Why High Frequency Rail (HFR) and not High Speed Rail?

By introducing a track dedicated to passenger trains, the High Frequency Rail (HFR) proposal seeks to offer an alternative to Canadians currently travelling by car, especially considering that more than 80% of trips in the Quebec City-Toronto corridor are by car and the majority are at a point of departure or destination that is not Québec City, Montréal, Ottawa or Toronto.

HFR can connect more communities than High-Speed Rail and at a lower cost by upgrading existing infrastructure and using existing rights-of-way.

Therefore, the HFR proposal would transform passenger rail service for Canadians by connecting more communities with more departures, improved schedules, shorter travel times, better on-time performance and new trains.

For more details regarding the High Frequency Rail (HFR) project, please visit our [website](#).

When will construction of High Frequency Rail start?

Does the federal government have any intention of approving HFR and subsequently providing the public with a start date or does the government simply plan on using this project as a ploy to obtain votes during the upcoming federal election followed by an announcement that HFR will be cancelled?

When will HFR be implemented? Do you have a plan to secure funding yet?

We are making progress. The feedback and support VIA Rail is receiving from all levels of government, community partners and Canadians is encouraging.

We are convinced that HFR will transform passenger rail service for Canadians by connecting more communities with more departures, improved schedules, shorter travel times, better on-time performance and new trains. This plan includes the upgrade of existing infrastructure and use existing rights-of-way from Quebec all the way to Toronto.

Regarding the project status, in the announcement made on June 25, 2019, Transport Canada and the Canada Infrastructure Bank committed a total of \$71.1 million to further explore VIA Rail's proposal for High Frequency Rail. The funding will be used to create a Joint Project Office (JPO) between Canada Infrastructure Bank and VIA Rail Canada. The JPO, which is currently being established, will focus on key components of the project such as: finalizing legal and regulatory work related to safety and environmental assessments; consulting with stakeholders and Indigenous communities; examining required land and track acquisition; and completing the technical, financial and commercial analysis required for a final investment decision on HFR. This announcement is a critical step forward in bringing VIA Rail closer to a modern passenger rail service for a more connected, more sustainable and more mobile Canada.

All the details regarding the High Frequency Rail (HFR) project can be found on our website.

Will the REM and HFR be able to share the Mount Royal tunnel?

Given how convenient it would be to have fast train between Québec and Montreal and Toronto, and given that the Mont Royal tunnel would have allowed you to use existing tracks to connect it to downtown Montreal, why did you not put up more of a fight to keep the tunnel when the Caisse de dépôt wanted to use it for its REM project?

The funds announced June 25 will finance amongst others, technical work to ensure the interoperability and integration of High Frequency Rail with operating tracks used by local and regional transit providers in Montreal and Toronto. This includes track work in Montreal's Mount-Royal Tunnel to enable VIA Rail's trains to operate on this segment of the *Réseau express métropolitain* (REM) light rail system. This important piece of preliminary work is needed so that the different rail systems work together should High Frequency Rail proceed in the future.

For more details please read the [Press Release](#) that was issued by Transport Canada.

Will you consider the possibility of electrification along the Quebec City-Windsor corridor?

The electrification of tracks is among the options proposed by VIA Rail in its HFR project.

Electrifying the entire HFR network would increase the project cost by up to \$2 Billion. Electrification is a public policy decision that belongs to the Government of Canada. Electrified or not, the project would provide improvements in terms of GHG reductions.

Will tickets on the trains using High Frequency Rail be affordable?

With HFR, VIA Rail will continue to offer an accessible service, maintaining similar entry level prices as those available today.

New Fleet / Modernization

When is VIA Rail going to renovate the HEP-2 VIA-1 cars? The previous CEO said one car would be renovated every month starting in September of last year.

What is the status of the refurbishment for both the HEP and HEP II equipment? When will we see these cars in service?

Work has been completed on six HEP II Economy cars and one Business car as of the end of September 2019. Upgrades include the overhaul of their mechanical system to ensure long-term reliability and the improvement of their interior design. At that time, four more HEP II cars were on the production line—one Economy and three Business cars. As well, work and required analysis to extend the lifecycle of additional HEP cars continued in the third quarter. And finally, 12 units have been completed out of a total of 15 as part of the P42 locomotive partial overhaul project, which is on schedule for completion in 2020. The partial overhaul consists of major systems requalification and/or rebuild, engine full rebuild, and corrosion repair.

Why is the inside of your cars so inconsistent (new and old) on the same route?

We currently operate three types of equipment in the Quebec City – Windsor corridor, and cannot always predict which train cars will be on which routes. We work to optimize the use of all of our equipment, and we are working to standardize the customer experience across all equipment types. To this end, the acquisition of a new fleet will allow for complete standardization within the corridor. Until mid-2020, VIA Rail will introduce renovated Heritage (HEP) stainless steel cars in the corridor as part of the Heritage Fleet Refurbishment Project.

Will the new fleet of Corridor trains have baggage cars? If not, will there be any provision of through checked baggage for passengers connecting between the *Ocean* and Corridor trains?

The new Siemens train sets will not have dedicated baggage cars, but will have ample space to safely carry specific oversized items like; larger musical instruments, bicycles and sporting equipment. Additionally, regular baggage and carry on capacity remain in line with our current capacity. A key improvement will be better and easier access to overhead space allowing passengers to stay in close proximity to their carry-on sized luggage.

VIA Rail is currently evaluating the process of baggage transfers between all long distance, regional and corridor trains which will be useful not only for the new fleet but also for the new reservation system, with the goal to improve this service.

Routes

The Muskoka area on up to North Bay is a beautiful part of our country with lots to offer. Would VIA Rail consider re-instating the "Northlander" passenger service from Toronto to North Bay?

Currently, VIA Rail is not planning to change the routing of the Canadian service. The route between Toronto and Thunder Bay is owned by third-party railway owners including Canadian Pacific (CP) and requires negotiations with, and authorization from, them.

Any chance there will be additional routes/services into the United States from Via Rail/Amtrak in the near future?

There are currently three Amtrak connecting services into Canada – New York to Montreal, New York to Toronto and Seattle to Vancouver. We are unaware of any developments regarding Amtrak wishing to extend additional services into Canada.

Will trains be added in Southwestern Ontario in the near future?

As we await a decision on HFR, there are small immediate fixes that could connect SW Ontario to the Corridor.

We revise our schedules twice a year, and work to best meet our passengers' needs. As is the case in most of our network, we are dependent on the access the third-party track owners grant us as well as the improvements needed in certain portions of the network to allow for more train departures. VIA Rail continues to engage with railway partners, infrastructure owners and community leaders to find a solution to meet the needs of our passengers and we remain committed to better serving communities in Southwestern Ontario.

As demonstrated by our results in the region where ridership has grown by 19% since 2016, the interest for the train is strong. Considering the demand, we will continue to make efforts to improve services in the region, working in close collaboration with our infrastructure and intermodality partners to find viable and affordable options to offer a seamless travel experience to passengers.

When will services resume in the Gaspé?

Will the *Chaleur* train resume services in Gaspésie in 2020, even partially?

The tracks on which VIA Rail operates in the Gaspésie region are owned by the Quebec government. Services in Gaspésie have been suspended since September 2013 due to the state of the infrastructure, which was deemed unsafe for passenger transportation.

In April 2018, the government of Quebec announced the beginning of rehabilitation work on the segment between Matapédia and Caplan in Gaspésie. Once the work is completed and the tracks are deemed safe for passenger transportation, VIA Rail intends to restore services in that area.

Fares

Why are VIA Rail's fares so high?

Isn't there a way to make train travel cheaper?

Long-distance travel by train is nice but expensive. To encourage youth, families and seniors to take the train, could you offer rates that make the train an affordable mode of transportation?

Our rates take into account the value of rail transportation in terms of comfort, amenities and on-train services, among other benefits.

Providing Canadians with affordable passenger rail transportation is a key part of our service offering. That's why we offer many fare options, including reduced

rates and promotional rates that provide people with greater accessibility to our services. Fare options include:

- Discount Tuesday (weekly discounted tickets)
- 21-day advance fares, which ensure the best rate possible
- Discounts for seniors (10% year-round), children (\$15 during the summer), students (Student Passes), First Nations and Indigenous people (33% year-round), military members (25% year-round) and new Canadian citizens (50% off the lowest fare available for a trip during the first year of citizenship)

We also offer special deals all year round on viarail.ca. Subscribers to our mailing list receive emails with information about current and upcoming sales. Our Canada-wide offers include:

- The Plan Your Summer sale in May
- The Canadian Black Friday sale in October
- The American Black Friday sale in November

To keep informed about all of our promotions, please [subscribe to our newsletter](#).

It used to be that a trip from Kingston to either Toronto or Montreal was roughly about half the cost of Toronto-Montreal. Lately the cost is similar if not the same. What is the reason for this given it is roughly half the distance and therefore half the resources needed?

Why is it cheaper at times to travel from Ottawa to Toronto than Ottawa to Montreal?

Fares are based on many factors including customer demand and train capacity and vary by train and by date. The difference in fares between the Montreal-Toronto route vs. the Toronto-Kingston route also range from smaller (for lower cost fares) or more substantial (for higher cost fares such as Business class) depending on these factors.

Do you have plans for cheaper fares for seniors?

We strive to offer great fares to everyone. Passengers who are 60 and over will continue to save 10% on the regular fare, and they can also take advantage of regular and special promotional offers throughout the year.

Do you plan to offer an ultra-low-cost class in the new trains to compete with Megabus and ultra-low-cost airlines (Swoop, Flair and Canada Jetlines)?

Our web-only Escape fares are targeted at price sensitive travellers. We recommend that you book as early as possible to take advantage of the lowest fares offered.

Why don't you have monthly pass for daily travel for commuters, like public transit does?

VIA Rail is a crown corporation whose mandate is different from the one of a Public Transit. It primarily provides inter-city, long-distance and regional travels. We offer a variety of passes to accommodate commuters and travellers for shorter or longer routes. Please see our products for business or leisure travels on the [Fares and Products](#) page of our web site.

Accessibility

When will VIA Rail change the design of its cars or its platforms, so that passengers can easily enter or leave a train without having to climb or descend stairs?

Accessibility is one of VIA Rail's top priorities. For many years, we have invested heavily in modernization projects and accessible transportation solutions. Passengers with reduced mobility receive personalized assistance from our personnel who have been trained to address special needs. These special services vary from one region to another depending on station facilities and train cars. Most of our stations have wheelchair lifts that are available to help people living with reduced mobility - not necessarily in a wheelchair - to get on and off the train without having to climb or descend stairs. Passengers should speak to an agent to purchase their tickets by telephone at **1 888 VIA-RAIL (1 888 842-7245)** or in person at one of our ticket offices to let us know which service they require. VIA Rail needs a minimum of 48 hours advanced notice of any special requirements.

When does VIA Rail plan to increase the capacity for accessibility on its passenger services?

Will all VIA Rail trains have new inside doorways 30 inches in width for wheelchairs in the future? Will there be 2 spots for wheelchairs in all trains?

VIA Rail is committed to remaining one of Canada's most accessible national and intercity modes of transportation. Our intention is not only to meet the Canadian Transportation Agency's requirements, but to exceed them. Over the years, we have made improvements to our trains, stations, and frontline services including the call centers, IT systems and website, to ensure Canadian passenger rail remains at the forefront of accessible transportation for travellers with mobility or other limitations.

Furthermore, the trains of our new fleet, which will be available starting in 2022, will have enhanced features designed to exceed accessibility standards. Particular emphasis is being placed on passenger amenities, including innovations in universal accessibility as we progress on the journey to a barrier-free Canada. They include multiple spaces for wheelchairs and other mobility devices on the trains, doorways 30 inches in width for wheelchairs, braille seat numbering, companion seating, at-seat emergency call buttons, larger fully accessible washrooms and an integrated mobility device lift. A comprehensive review of many of the planned accessibility features, including life sized mock ups, is planned with our universal accessibility partners for early 2020.

Is there a way to order my tickets online? As I am a disabled passenger, presently I must phone to make reservations which can take up to 20 minutes.

Why must we call in our requests for the lift? Shouldn't it be linked to our profile or on a button on reservations?

Speaking with a VIA Rail agent is the best way for us to determine your travel needs, which may vary from one trip to the next. We request that you call in at least 48 hours before departure to speak with an agent, at 1 888 VIA-RAIL (1 888 842-7245), for our personnel to be able to provide you with the best service possible.

Services

When will the on-train Wi-Fi be improved, so that passengers can stream videos online (on YouTube, for instance)?

Since 2018, we have invested large amounts of money to increase Wi-Fi capacity and stabilize the Wi-Fi connection on board. Today, over 80% of our railcars have been upgraded, and our efforts are ongoing.

We are unable to offer video streaming due to bandwidth limits. Allowing video streaming would drastically reduce the Wi-Fi quality for all passengers.

Will online booking include choosing your own seat and your meal in the future?

Please allow cancellation/changes to be permitted online, with the understanding of your applicable policies and fees.

Unfortunately our current reservation system doesn't allow seat or menu selection when booking online. The good news is that we are in the process to replace our reservation system which will make it possible for us to offer these long-awaited functionalities. Of course, there will always be exceptions or circumstances where reservations or special arrangements will have to be made over the phone with our VIA Client Center agents.

Please note that [cancelling or making changes to one's reservations](#) online is currently possible.

When will small pets in carriers be able to travel with their owners?

I've been taking Via Rail since 2010 and I love the train far better than the bus or a plane. However, I have a dog and love to bring him everywhere with me. Will Via Rail be making changes to the pet restrictions anytime soon?

In the Québec-Windsor corridor, VIA Rail allows dogs and cats to travel in cars with their owners in a pet carrier that meets our carrier standards. Animals are sentient beings, so we want to make sure that they're treated respectfully and travel comfortably while on board. The reservation for travelling with a pet must be made once the ticket has been purchased and at least two days before

departure. It is strongly recommended to advise us well in advance, as space is limited and subject to availability. Unfortunately, pets cannot be allowed in passenger cars on long routes or adventure routes. Different measures apply for pets in a baggage car and for service or support dogs. All pertinent information can be found on our website at viarail.ca.

When will VIA Rail start accepting the use of Debt Cards on the trains?

Our new Point of Sale system requires a cellular network connection to process debit card transactions. Seeing as cellular coverage is inconsistent across VIA Rail's network, debit card transactions are not possible in certain locations. To ensure consistency of payment methods, VIA Rail will be accepting credit cards as transactions can be completed even while offline (Store and Forward).

**When is VIA Rail going to allow bikes on board, like planes and buses do?
Quand VIA Rail autorisera-t-elle ses passagers à amener leurs vélos à bord,
comme c'est déjà le cas en avion et en bus?**

We currently accept bikes on trains in the Québec City- Windsor corridor operating with baggage cars, and (for space constraint limitations) folding bikes in the baggage towers provided on our trains without baggage cars. We suggest that you contact our VIA Customer Centre, visit us in person at a station counter, or that you visit our website to learn more.

**When will VIA Rail allow bicycles to be shipped on *all* its inter-city trains?
Is there a plan to make all trains bike accessible?**

With the arrival of our new train fleet in 2022, we fully expect to be able to offer a more comprehensive bike service that better responds clients' expectations while respecting safety and security regulations. You can visit our website for updates on our fleet replacement.

Environment

VIA Rail runs all of their trains on diesel. Should it be time to find alternative cleaner energy to operate VIA trains such as electrification on busier lines or perhaps even better to operate on hydrogen power source as been tested in Germany recently?

Our new fleet of trains will significantly reduce our environmental footprint. The new locomotives will be equipped with the latest technology (Tier 4 engines that emit 90% fewer particulates than older trains), which will improve air quality, reduce their environmental impact and produce four to five times less pollution than cars and other modes of transportation. Our new trains—the locomotive in particular—will also be quieter than the current fleet. The new trains will be designed to operate on electrified rail infrastructure, should it become available.

Can we be assured that VIA Rail will immediately stop all spraying Glyphosates to the rail lines bordering on so many private properties?

VIA Rail is aware of the issue regarding glyphosate and we are intending to limit usage as much as possible. We are currently working with specialists to guide us in controlling vegetation surrounding our tracks and because we are using as mild a mixture of products possible, we must repeat application yearly. The current application of products to control vegetation—which is being reviewed—helps to ensure a safe infrastructure for passengers, employees and surrounding communities.

What is VIA Rail doing in order to reduce the amount of one-time use plastics used on board?

As part of our ongoing efforts to be more sustainable and our objective to reduce our environmental footprint, we started to reduce the amount of one-time use plastics used on board in 2018 with the replacement of plastic straws and coffee stirrer sticks by paper-based and wood-based products. This effort led us to launch a life-cycle analysis of the products used on board of our trains to identify better alternatives that would help us reduce our overall environmental footprint, from buying to waste management.

Moving forward, we will continue to replace products used on board by more environmentally friendly alternatives, for example, working with our food supplier to eliminate single-use plastics used in packaging. In addition, we will continue to focus our efforts on our work practices and the physical environment in our trains and stations to increase the amount of materials recovered for recycling which

can then be transferred directly to sorting facilities from the moment they're disposed of at our stations.

For the future, we are designing our new fleet and services to eliminate the use of single-use plastic cups and glasses in the business class service, introduce more locally produced Canadian products and supplies, and develop proper onboard recuperation and sorting capacities to maximize recycling and reduce waste.

Why does VIA Rail not use source biodegradable suppliers for its cups, coffee cups, cup toppers and utensils?

We are currently in the process of changing many of our onboard products to ensure we continue to reduce our footprint from our onboard operations. Recent changes have included better options for straws, stir sticks, coffee cups, and disposable cutlery. Collection methods and the disposal of goods are also being addressed to ensure we respect the entire cycle of responsible sustainability.

Why is VIA Rail creating more garbage in the Business Class service by serving some hot meals in aluminum containers instead of crockery? Also, is it not time VIA served pre and after-meal drinks in glass instead of plastic and restored the use of cloth napkins instead of paper?

Our Business class service typically uses re-useable dishware. Unfortunately, we recently had to rely on disposable dishware for certain parts of our service due to unforeseen supply shortages in cases when we were had no other option. We are working to avoid these substitutions and trust that our intent is to retain and increase our usage of reusable products.

Security

Due to the increase of violent behaviour in our society by the impact of substance abuse, mental health issues, etc, what is VIA Rail's plan to ensure their riders are safe?

VIA Rail's security measures vary from one location to another to prevent, detect, respond, and recover from security incidents. They are risk-based, intelligence-driven, reviewed continuously, and modified whenever needed. These measures include, but are not limited to: access control, centralized video surveillance, random use of portable screening technology, visible and covert security staff and police patrols, canine units, intelligence-sharing, partnership interoperability, security risk assessments, emergency preparedness plans, security awareness programs, enhanced employee training, and security exercises, among others. Most of our security activities occur "behind the scenes" and are not disclosed for security reasons.