



*Spring 2009*

## North America's Most Modern Passenger Trains

### **ABOUT THE TRAINS:**

VIA's 106 Renaissance cars are not only the newest intercity passenger equipment on North American rails, they are the most unique. Renaissance is a blend of the best of Continental and Canadian rail technology that provides exceptional levels of comfort, safety and operating efficiency.

The Renaissance cars have a remarkable pedigree. They were originally commissioned by European Nightstock Services, a consortium of railways from Britain, France, Germany and Belgium, for operation on trains through the Channel Tunnel to destinations in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. The cars were built by Alstom's venerable Metro-Cammell Washwood Heath plant, near Birmingham, England. The firm spent four years completing the engineering designs to meet the stringent operating and safety requirements of the five countries in the consortium.

But changing market conditions conspired against the overnight Chunnel rail services. Work on the cars was halted in 1998 and it was mothballed in England in various states of completion.

After an intense evaluation by VIA staff, three cars were brought to Canada for modification and testing in June 2000. The equipment had previously been tested extensively overseas to ensure its safety and reliability in Europe and Morocco. To ensure their suitability for use in Canadian climatic conditions, the Nightstock was put through stringent "cold room" tests at European research facilities comparable to Ottawa's National Research Council labs for operation at temperatures as low as -40° C.

On December 15, 2000, VIA announced the purchase of all 139 complete and incomplete Nightstock cars, to be rebuilt as the Renaissance fleet and deployed on the Quebec-Windsor Corridor daytime trains and the overnight Montreal-Halifax *Ocean*. This was the first major purchase of passenger cars by VIA since 1981, expanding the total passenger fleet by one-third to increase VIA's ridership, revenues and cost-effectiveness.

This rolling stock was purchased and completed for only \$160 million, including the upgrading to Canadian standards and the completion of some of the unfinished cars in Canada. This was an exceptional bargain as the replacement value of the fleet was pegged at \$400-500 million.

The 64 completed cars and 75 incomplete Renaissance carshells and components were shipped from England to Bombardier Transportation's Thunder Bay, Ontario, plant for modification and completion to VIA's own designs. All safety-related systems were

converted to North American standards. Major changes were made in the layout of some cars to make them more suitable for VIA's operating conditions and market demands. The result was the 106-car Renaissance fleet consisting of:

- 27 sleeping cars with 10 two-berth cabins, all with en-suite full retention toilets. Six of the cabins have showers and all are equipped with a clothes valet, seating for three, luggage storage, an intercom system and a smoke/fire detector. The doors can be locked by passengers for security when they are not in the room.
- 33 economy class coaches seating 50 passengers in a 2+1 arrangement with under-seat baggage storage. The comfortable seats are equipped with footrests and large seat-back trays.
- 14 business class club cars which, like the coaches, provide 2+1 seating for 50 passengers, but include food and beverage preparation and storage galleys.
- 17 service cars with a lounge area, a large galley for food and beverage preparation and storage, a baggage area and a train service manager's office.
- 3 dining cars with 32 seats arranged in tables of four on one side and 16 seats at tables for two on the other, plus a full-service kitchen, a takeout counter and some baggage space.
- 9 baggage cars with skid-resistant floors that prevent baggage from shifting during transport. These cars were fashioned out of available shells.
- 3 baggage-transition cars, designed to let passengers aboard the *Ocean* access sleeping and lounge facilities in the scenic dome-equipped Park car at the rear of the train. The transition cars have a standard coupler at one end to mate with a Park car behind and a second specialized coupler to connect safely with Renaissance cars ahead.

All Renaissance cars are equipped with modern public address and passenger information systems and a crew intercom. They have modern, clean appointments and exteriors similar to VIA's Canadian-built Light, Rapid and Comfortable (LRC) cars, which are undergoing a \$100 million overhaul by Industrial Rail Services, Inc. (IRSI), in Moncton, New Brunswick. A further 33 Renaissance car shells and components remain in storage to protect for passenger traffic growth in the future.

#### **ABOUT THE PROJECT:**

The current \$5.8 million accessibility upgrading contract with IRSI covers 21 Renaissance cars of three types. The designs are the result of extensive consultations between VIA and representatives of the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD).

VIA is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards to ensure the comfort and safety of customers with restricted mobility, as well as other disabilities. VIA takes pride in its responsiveness to passengers with special needs and this latest project is a clear demonstration of that commitment. This project greatly expands that previous level accessibility on the Renaissance equipment. Mock-ups were prepared and scrutinized by VIA, the CTA and the CCD.

In nine Renaissance economy class coaches – one for each daytime train used in Quebec-Windsor Corridor service – seven seats will be removed from one end for the construction of an enlarged washroom that will be spacious enough for easy use by a traveller with

special requirements and accompanied by a service animal or care provider. As well, seats in these new accessible coaches will be equipped with flip-up armrests to provide easier access and additional room.

Nine Renaissance baggage cars will have their mid-car doors widened for more efficient baggage handling.

Three Renaissance sleeping cars assigned to each of the trains on the overnight Montreal-Halifax *Ocean* will be modified and improved for operation adjacent to each of the service cars. Two cabins at one end of these sleepers will be combined and re-oriented to provide straight-in access – eliminating the negotiation of a 90-degree turn – from the extra-wide vestibules of the service cars. These new accessible cabins will also contain spacious, fully-accessible washroom facilities.

The assistance VIA makes available to those with special needs on existing trains – such as special wheelchairs designed for use onboard trains and free travel for care providers accompanying passengers in certain circumstances – will be available on trains equipped with the improved Renaissance accessible coaches, baggage cars and sleepers.

The first of these 21 accessible Renaissance cars will be delivered by IRSI in December 2009 and the project will be completed by December 2011.

#### ***ABOUT THE PROJECT'S BENEFITS:***

The Renaissance accessibility upgrading project will create 35 jobs at IRSI in Moncton and 61,000 person hours of employment. As well, this and the concurrent overhaul of VIA's LRC fleet will create another 50 jobs at IRSI's associated companies and suppliers throughout Canada.

#### ***ABOUT INDUSTRIAL RAIL SERVICES, INC:***

Industrial Rail Services, Inc. (IRSI) of Moncton, New Brunswick, is a full-service locomotive and passenger rail car facility specializing in equipment repairs, remanufacturing, modifications and refurbishment. Since its founding in 1999, IRSI has become North America's premier rebuilder of rail passenger equipment, strengthening Moncton's reputation as a global rail centre of excellence for more than a century.

IRSI's modern and well-equipped facility is located in the CN Gordon Yard on the eastern transcontinental main line. Its 125,000-square-foot facility is equipped with 18 exhausted service bays, overhead cranes, drop tables, tool cribs, designated stores and document control areas, a metal fabrication shop, training facilities, a wash bay and a new 100-foot, state-of-the-art paint shop.

The strength of IRSI is its highly skilled and dedicated workforce, whose craftsmanship is recognized throughout the rail industry and has earned the company certification by the Association of American Railroads.

**ABOUT VIA RAIL CANADA:**

As Canada's national rail passenger service, VIA Rail Canada's mandate is to provide efficient, environmentally sustainable and cost-effective passenger transportation services, both in Canada's business corridor and in remote and rural regions of the country. Every week, VIA operates 503 intercity, transcontinental and regional trains that link 450 communities across its 12,500-kilometre route network.

The demand for VIA services is growing as travellers increasingly turn to train travel as a safe, hassle-free and environmentally responsible alternative to congested roads and airports. In 2008, VIA safely transported 4.6 million passengers – the most since 1989 – and set an all-time record of \$299 million in revenue.

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Media Contact:  
Malcolm Andrews  
VIA Rail Canada  
514-871-6602  
514-946-4160 (cell)