



East Algoma Chief's Mayor's and Reeve's Council

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Track to the Future: Building a Northern Ontario Passenger Rail Network

Presented by:
**The East Algoma Chiefs, Mayors and Reeves
Council**

Presented to:
**The Honourable Bob Chiarelli
Minister of Infrastructure**

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The Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains
The NORDIK Research Institute

Member Communities

Batchewana First Nation · Town of Blind River · Town of Bruce Mines · City of Elliot Lake · Garden River First Nation ·
Township of Hilton

Village of Hilton Beach · Municipality of Huron Shores · Township of Jocelyn · Township of Johnson · Township of Laird
Township of MacDonald, Meredith & Aberdeen Add'l. · Mississauga First Nation · Township of The North Shore
Township Plummer Additional · Township Prince · Township of Sables-Spanish Rivers · Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation
Serpent River First Nation · Town of Spanish · Township of St. Joseph · Township of Tarbutt & Tarbutt Additional · Town of
Thessalon

Thessalon First Nation · Whitefish Lake First Nation

Executive Summary:

Rail is increasingly being recognized as an efficient, ecologically sustainable and affordable option for passenger transit services in North America. Across the province of Ontario and Canada as a whole, municipalities and First Nations are creating working models of community-owned shortline railways. Through these models and through research into rail transportation we see that passenger rail can provide an economic generator for rural and First Nations communities, helping to bolster tourism initiatives, provide access to much-needed health care services, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from personal automobiles, and aid in population retention. It is for these reasons that the East Algoma Chiefs Mayors and Reeves Council have struck an ad-hoc committee to further explore the potentials of rebuilding passenger rail services across Northern Ontario.

Facilitated by the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, the East Algoma Chiefs Mayors and Reeves Council have determined the next best step to take in this initiative would be to commission a feasibility study which will give them a greater level of understanding of current railway conditions along the line in question, the Huron Central Railway. Additionally, a feasibility study would look at potential market for passenger use, costs for potential upgrades to passenger level standards, and a more detailed knowledge of the rights and restrictions currently covered in the contract agreement between the Huron Central Railway and CPR.

Through the Public Transit Agreement and the Gas Tax Agreement Canada, Ontario and the Association of Ontario Municipalities have set a provincial priority to develop the sustainability and future prosperity of communities to enable all Canadians to achieve a higher quality of life, taking into account four dimensions: economic, environmental, social and cultural. It is the feeling of the East Algoma Chiefs, Mayors and Reeves Council, and is illustrated in this brief, that this initiative encompasses all four of these dimensions, while providing a significant return on investment for the Province of Ontario. Further research into this area is needed in order to paint a more detailed picture of the true values of rail development to the Province. Also needed is recognition from the province as to the priority of rail as a sustainable transportation option for the future.

The vision presented here for a Northern Ontario Passenger Rail Network encompasses existing and proposed passenger rail services. Existing services cut-out many communities and do not provide East-West linkages. By reinstating passenger service between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury, connecting it to North Bay and on to Ottawa, a trans-provincial system emerges which would benefit both Southern and Northern Ontario. The Ottawa Valley Railway, currently up for abandonment by CPR is an important piece of building this network. While municipalities along this line take action to organize, the Province has the jurisdiction through the Shortline Railways Act of 1995 to ensure that this piece of infrastructure is not lost.

Overview:

The purpose of this brief is to illustrate the need and advantages for support from the Province of Ontario in the development of a functional passenger rail network in Northern Ontario. Currently the East Algoma Chiefs, Mayors and Reeves Council are in discussion with the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains regarding the potential models for operation of a shortline passenger rail service between Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay, , with connections for smaller and rural communities in Northern Ontario and linkages to large multi-modal urban cities, Ottawa and Toronto. At this time many rural communities are cut-off from the rest of the province due to gaps in the currently existing system. The network proposed in this brief would connect service with the Ontario Northland Railway, Via Rail and the Algoma Central Railway. Currently the Huron Central Railway has received Provincial and Federal funds to upgrade to freight standards the existing rail-bed along which the proposed connecting passenger service would run. At this time it seems prudent for further exploration to be given to the matter of increasing these upgrades along the Huron Central Railway to facilitate potential passenger operations; thereby giving the 8 First Nation Councils and 23 communities represented by the East Algoma Chiefs, Mayors and Reeves Council the opportunity to develop what is felt to be an essential alternative mode of transportation for their region, with significant economic, social, environmental and social benefits.

Resolution #11 -11

Be it resolved that the East Algoma Chiefs Mayor and Reeves Council establish an Ad Hoc Committee to:

- Act as a task force from the larger collective
- Identify and represent common goals of the communities regarding rail
- Bring parallel railway interests together
- See if collaborative agreement and co-operation between communities is possible
- Build political will and educate the public about the potential benefits of passenger rail
- Apply for funding independently or through partnership for a feasibility study to answer in-depth questions regarding financial, structural details, etc.

VISION: An efficient, affordable and functional passenger rail network in North Eastern Ontario with connections from First Nation and rural communities to Toronto and Ottawa as well as other provincial and national railways.

GOAL: To reinstate passenger service along the HCR with connections for communities including First Nations.

REQUEST: That the Province of Ontario:

Support the motion of the East Algoma Chiefs, Mayors and Reeves Council in seeking public input regarding the development of a Northern Ontario Passenger Network.

Support rail as a transportation opportunity for rural, First Nations and aging communities in Ontario.

Be open to providing funding avenues towards the development of a feasibility study which would explore rail as an economic generator and passenger service for the communities of East Algoma.

Building a Northern Ontario Railway Network: Environmental, Social and Economic Benefits

- Aging populations in Northern Ontario necessitates increasing affordable, and accessible travel options to seniors to access healthcare. While populations are aging across the province, Northern Ontario is seeing a greater-than-average percentage of people moving into the senior age-range. Based on the 2006 census, the median percentage of seniors in the Algoma District is 30.8% while provincially it is 17%. (Statistics Canada)
 - Emerging and developing universities and colleges in Northern Ontario would benefit from affordable, effective and comfortable travel options for students and developing faculty in order to draw from a wider Ontario population base.
 - Connection to a provincial and national transportation system would aid young people in coming back to their communities to live and to visit, helping to curb the flow of outmigration, especially on reserves.
 - 73% of all greenhouse gases emitted in Ontario are due to personal automobile transportation. Reducing the frequency of long distances traveled by personal automobiles in Ontario will be essential for the province and the country to meet their GHG reduction targets. The further development of public transit has already been identified as a priority in meeting Provincial GHG reduction goals. (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, 2010)
 - Global costs for oil are in a constant state of fluctuation, with an exponential increase which gives no indication of slowing. As a non-oil producing province, the outlook for Ontario (and especially geographically remote regions) is improved by reducing our broad socio-economic reliance on fossil fuels for transportation. This can be accomplished by investing in rail as a sustainable and cost effective mode of transportation.
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- Northern Ontario is a very large region making long distance travel challenging and expensive (8 hour drive to nearest large urban cities)
- Winter and extreme weather conditions make seasonal highway travel dangerous, difficult and time consuming
- Communities in Northern Ontario are isolated geographically, socially, and economically
- Citizens of Northern Ontario are limited in public transportation options, driving hours in order to reach limited airport services and facing a reduction in Greyhound Canada bus services

Ontario Infrastructure: Strategic investment in a multi-modal future

- In 2008 the “Public Transit Agreement” was agreed to by Canada, the Province of Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the City of Toronto, to fund environmentally sustainable and forward-looking strategic development of public transit; being socially, economically and culturally appropriate; including a flexible approach whereby Parties could flow money to municipalities; with the recognition of ongoing collaboration to address long-term needs of Canadians. (Infrastructure Canada)
- Infrastructure renewal and maintenance costs 20 times lower per ton-kilometer* in comparison between rail and highways. (Bombardier, “Think Economy, Think Trains”)
- Estimates for building a single-track section of railway without bridges or diverging track switches costs an estimate of \$1 - 3 million per mile prior to crew costs (VIA Rail) (Gormic, 2004)
- Railways depreciate at a much slower rate than highways. A one-time investment into rail bed infrastructure will allow for decades of use, while highways require upgrades at a minimum of every 15 years.

Figure 1: Cost of Highway Infrastructure vs. Cost of Rail (to build)

	4 Lane Highway (with a 45m Right of Way)	Double-tracked Railway (with a 15m Right of Way)
Land costs	\$3 Mil/km	\$1 Mil/km
Earth work costs	\$11 Mil/km	\$3.7 Mil/km
Bridges, tunnels and viaducts	\$5.5 Mil/km	\$1.9 Mil/km
Interchanges/ rail crossings	\$8 Mil/ interchange	\$3 Mil/ crossing
Total estimate	\$19 Mil/ km + interchanges	\$15.6 Mil / km + crossings

- Planned Ontario spending for the 2009/10 annum was an estimated \$2035 Million devoted towards highway expansion and rehabilitation of highways and highway bridges compared to \$1,139 Million devoted towards all* other transportation developments including planning activities, highway service control centers, municipal/local roads/ remote airports. **exclusive of inter-city transit costs.* (Ministry of Finance, Ontario Construction Secretariat)

- Ontario expects a growth of four million residents in the next 25 years and in that time almost a quarter of the total population will be over 65 years of age. Such demographic change should heighten the need for the province's transport policy to lay emphasis on road safety, accessibility, sustainability and the provision of greater mobility choices for the elderly to achieve a healthy and inclusive society. (Mercado, Paez and Newbold, 2007)

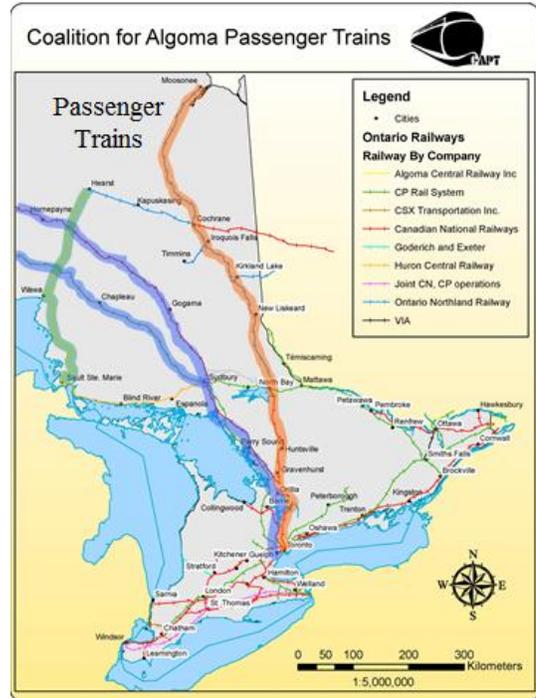
Rail as an Economic Driver

- In 2008 VIA rail saw 4.6 million passengers transported (the highest since 1989) and an all-time record of \$299 million in revenue. (VIA Rail)
- Increasing the standards of railways to passenger standards allows for faster and more economical transportation of freight, increasing public and private sector revenues.
- Car travel generates additional infrastructure costs that are on average three times higher than those for equivalent travel by train. (Schreyer et. Al, 2004)
- The current economies of the East Algoma communities are largely industry, resource, agricultural and tourism based. Having the potential to develop and oversee rail operations would provide them with a marketable product, would facilitate easier shipping for existing products (current freight operations being closed off from small-scale users) and provide room for development of other local services to meet consumer demands.
- External personal costs associated with passenger car travel are, on average, three times more than an equivalent trip by rail. (Schreyer et. al, 2004)
- Residents of cities with a high-quality public transit system pay around \$100 per year in tax to finance this system, but save \$500 in transportation costs over the same period. (Litman, T. 2011)
- Developing a connected network for passenger rail allows for the creation of a Northern Ontario Rail Pass, similar to rail passes used along European railway networks. This creates a marketable tourism product for Northern Ontario, and increases flow into other regional tourism operations within the region.

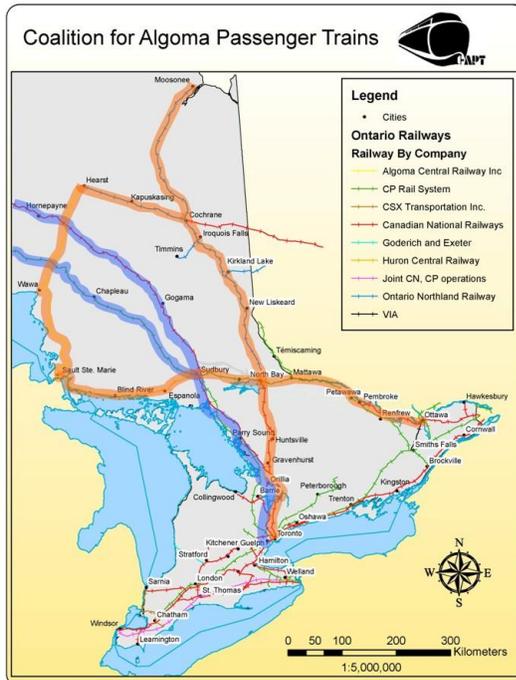
The Current System

- Via Rail's Interprovincial Service from Toronto through Sudbury and Gogama to Western Canada (3x weekly).
- Via Rail's Budd-Car Service from Sudbury to Chapleau and White River (3x week in each direction).
- Algoma Central's (CN) service between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst (3x week in each direction).
- Ontario Northland's service between Cochrane and Toronto and between Cochrane and Moosonee (daily except Saturday).
- There exist major East-West gaps in the currently system, making travel between Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, North Bay, and

Ottawa as well as Hearst and Cochrane difficult.



The Proposed Network



- Interconnects Northeastern and Eastern Ontario with Ottawa and Toronto
- Provides services for over 24 communities and 8 First Nations from Sault Ste Marie to North Bay
- Connects the Algoma Central Railway, the Ontario Northland Railway and current VIA services, building a unique and efficient Northern Ontario rail loop
- Connects all users of this network to further transportation options including rail networks out of Toronto and Ottawa

Community Need:

The Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains is currently conducting research regarding the social return on investment as an outcome of potential passenger rail service along the Huron Central Railway. As a part of this study, a survey was completed outlining public desire for such a service to exist.

Of the 106 respondents to the initial survey:

- 48.5% were over the age of 50.
- 60.3% travelled between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury at least 3 times a year.
- Of these respondents, 64% suggested they would be willing to travel 3 times a year between Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury by train if available, and nearly 30% indicated they would use it a minimum of 5 times a year.
- Significant interest (47%) was shown in inter-community travel between communities in Algoma.
- 86% of respondents currently use personal vehicles as their main form of regional travel for long-distance trips.
- 28% travelled to access education, 27% travelled for employment purposes, 31% travelled for medical services and 90% travelled to see family and friends.
- 84% indicated that they know people from outside their community who would like to travel by train to come visit them.
- 82% of respondents suggested they felt the province should be among the groups to take on responsibility of providing passenger rail services.

This survey is a precursor to a more in-depth exploration which should be done to measure community desire. It is recommended that an in-depth feasibility study should be conducted to further explore potential costs, usage, ticket price-points, models for operation and need.

Details of Proposed Service

<p>Proposed Operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sault Ste. Marie to Ottawa, daily except Sat. • Ottawa to Sault Ste. Marie, daily except Sat. • Interchange with O.N.T.C. at North Bay • Early morning departures • Early evening arrivals • Connection at Ottawa with VIA Rail • Connection at Toronto with Via Rail 	<p>Sample Schedule:</p> <p>Eastbound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lv SSM @ 06:30 – Arr Sudbury 10:30 • Lv Sudbury 10:45 – Arr North Bay 12:45 • Lv North Bay 13:00 – Arr Ottawa 18:004 <p>Westbound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lv Ottawa @ 08:00 Arr North Bay 13:00 • Lv North Bay 14:30 Arr Sudbury 16:30 • Lv Sudbury 16:45 Arr SSM 20:45
<p>Relevant Rail Lines for Connecting the System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize Huron Central (HCR) line SSM-Sudbury • Connect with Ottawa Valley (OVR) Sudbury – Pembroke • Connect with Ottawa Central (OCR) Pembroke - Ottawa • All lines except OCR are CP owned lines 	<p>Southbound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lv SSM @ 06:30 – Arr Sudbury 10:30 • Lv Sudbury 10:45 – Arr North Bay 12:45 • Lv North Bay 13:35 – Arr Toronto @ 19:15 <p>Northbound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lv SSM @ 06:30 – Arr Sudbury 10:30 • Lv Sudbury 10:45 – Arr North Bay 12:45 • Lv North Bay 14:05 – Arr Cochrane @ 19:25 <p>Minimum ½ hour to effect transfers</p>

Provincial Perspective:

The following is a list of shortline railways in Ontario municipally owned and operated under contract to service providers:

- Orangeville-Brampton Railway (OBRY)
- Barrie-Collingwood Railway (BCRY)
- Guelph Junction Railway (GJR)
- Transport Pontiac Renfrew is currently negotiating an agreement with CN to facilitate a donation of the Beechburg Subdivision of the Ottawa Central Railway to 8 municipalities; 4 in Ontario and 4 in Quebec.
- Shining Waters Railway is currently commissioning a feasibility study and business plan for the Peterborough – Toronto shortline being negotiated between the CPR and a non-profit consortium representing municipalities. The Provincial and Federal Government have collectively set-aside \$300 Million for the project.

The following is a list of shortline railways under municipal and First Nations ownership, operated under contract to passenger service providers:

- Island Corridor Foundation on Vancouver Island
- Keewatin Railway in Northern Manitoba
- Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway in Quebec and Labrador

National/ International Perspective:

- Canadian Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities Chuck Strahl recently stated “Our vision is of a future integrated transportation system that is sustainable, competitive, safe and secure, serving the needs of shippers, passengers and all Canadians,” he said. “Investing in the right technologies, research and business strategies will provide a competitive edge by improving efficiency, reliability and sustainability.” (Transport Canada, Feb. 9, 2011)
- President Obama is advocating a six-year, \$53 billion investment in high speed rail (HSR) as part of his thrust to use infrastructure spending to create jobs. He hopes to create HSR access to 80% of all Americans within a 25-year period. The initial rail spending would focus on developing or improving trains that travel up to 150 miles per hour, and connecting existing rail lines to new projects. National Association of Railroad Passengers President, Ross Capon commented “If we are to develop a modern transportation system that gives Americans the travel choices they need and cut our reliance on foreign oil, we need our leaders to show this steadfast determination to get the job done.” (Railway Age, Feb. 8, 2011)

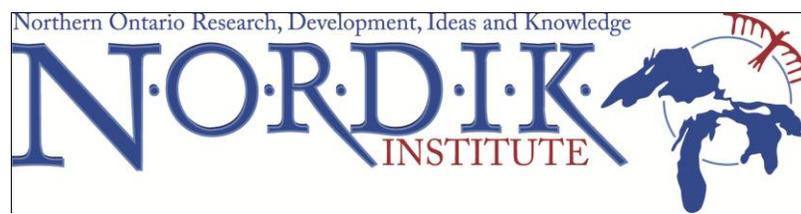
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The Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains is a non-profit organization made up of individuals, businesses and other interests who recognize the significant social, economic, employment, cultural, historical and environmental value of Algoma Passenger trains.

www.captrains.ca



NORDIK Institute is a community-based research institute associated with Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie. Its focus is on regional and First Nations development and promotes more vibrant, caring and sustainable communities through research, dialogue, analysis and action.
www.nordikinsitute.com

The work of compiling this brief was prepared by researcher Emily Colombo, in cooperation with the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains, the NORDIK Research Institute and the East Algoma Chiefs, Mayors and Reeves Council.

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