

[The road ahead for the Malahat Maps included](#) Rob Shaw, Times Colonist, July 14, 2013
[Effort to resume E&N passenger rail service gets support from B.C. minister](#) Rob Shaw, Times Colonist, July 22, 2013.

ITO Comment: Good news on 22 July, but that does little to solve the Malahat congestion until 2015; so, mitigation of that problem still needs the attention of all CRD Councils and the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure.

Responses and Proposed Solutions:

JS, 23 July 2013:

The cost of roads (including the millions of dollars spent on the Malahat) should be paid by drivers demanding the service and not subsidized by all taxpayers. Creating a supply does not create a demand?

Except... yes it does. Or, to be more precise, providing supply (transit options) reveals latent demand. Especially if the supply is underpriced. Pretty much every road expansion everywhere proves this point, as it fills up with traffic that wasn't there before. It amazes me how many people willingly part with their tax money for roads, that's fine, but any investment in alternatives to roads is considered a waste.

It's all the more baffling in this case, since Malahat Drive is often closed or backed up due to accidents, and there are no road alternatives. People clamor for an interchange at Mackenzie and Admirals, which would probably cost MORE than upgrading the rail line (e.g. the MacTavish interchange cost \$24 million). I don't get it. Why wouldn't you want a faster, cleaner alternative? Even if you have no interest in ever riding a train, there is the advantage of rail ridership freeing up road space.

Lots of places in the world have tried paving their way to "mobility". It doesn't work. Provide frequent service on the rail line (not the old nearly useless VIA service) and it will be a valuable alternative, used by many.

Craig Kelly, 23 July 2013:

It is time that we as a society gave up our needs to use cars and instead moved to mass transit as a means of getting to and from work, school etc.; the environment and your pocket book could sure use a break.

Adding commuter rail service from Duncan via Shawnigan Lake to Victoria would be a major benefit to the economy of Victoria. It will allow for easy access to business in the downtown core whilst reducing traffic on other major routes (Hwy 1). Sure there is a cost to doing this but in the end it is less than the upgrades required to Hwy 1 and the Malahat; it will also certainly cost less in lives than those routes.

We've noted an increase in walk-on passengers at Swartz Bay; so, would also like to see a route out to the Ferries and one on the other side to Richmond and the airport to link with the Vancouver Canada Line.

Louis Guilbault, Victoria, 14 July 2013

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, while your Sunday articles on the Malahat were very interesting, there is zero mention of the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway. All the maps, though, show it sitting there, completely unused.

Even the lowball \$200 million estimate for expanding the Malahat could make the E&N into a real railway again, completely upgraded, and with modern cars for transporting passengers and freight.

In Switzerland, there are several RORO (roll on roll off) services that let people shuttle their cars through tunnels. Then there's the Chunnel, which moves prodigious numbers of cars and trucks between England and France. We need to consider things like this.

Dick Faulks, Victoria, July 2013

It would be helpful to have the Provincial government see the benefit of rail - which saves on costs of highway maintenance. This is occurring in other provinces, as noted in the video, "De-Railed - the National Dream". Here, rail must be seen as "transportation" just as much as highways are seen in that light. Therefore, highway funding - "transportation" funding - should include the maintenance of rail-bed and infrastructure - bridges, etc. Operators on the rail should have no role in maintenance of the way, just as highway freight carriers are not involved with maintenance of highways. Rail on the Island must be in place and put to good use before further tax dollars are used to make more roads.

Lloyd Skaalen, Victoria, 15 July 2013

There were just two mentions of the E&N in the otherwise comprehensive 14 July article:

- a. the Stantec study of 2007 made mention of that option;
- b. the author (Rob Shaw) suggests our E&N line "sits mostly unused" (true for passenger service).

There was no comparison of the costs of getting that line operational v.s. other options, nor how much traffic it could take off the current highway!

That omission must be tackled and must include growth of the E&N line after the \$20M, now sitting in the "bank", has been exhausted. Minister Stone, If VIA is the problem in getting those funds released for that upgrade, find another contractor for that scheduling service!

Meantime, until that rail line gets upgraded to rapid freight and commuter passenger rail standards, we have no choice but to limit Malahat traffic through:

- a. increasing the capability of Mill Bay Ferry service;
- b. introducing time limits for heavy trucks on that highway south of Mill Bay; e.g. 7 - 10 am south bound and 3 - 7 pm northbound from Westhills;
- c. installing traffic counters or web cam monitoring of those timing limits for heavy vehicles; and
- d. restricting traffic at both ends to those carrying a GPS identifier (owner purchased by regular users or "rented" by irregular users at check points) and such vehicles notified by electronic signs re maximum speed permissible (i.e. as congestion status increases, speed permitted is reduced). Automation example: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontario_Highway_407

Enforcement of such limits must be established and severe for repeat offenders.

The cost of such action? Probably less than the \$8M for the 5 km upgrade just made! The reduced and more orderly traffic realized by these measures will reduce a number of other costly consequences of current traffic: road repair, accident costs and environmental damages!

Brendan Read, 20 July 2013:

"Why not passenger-only ferries across the Saanich Inlet, and passenger (and/or vehicle) ferries from CowBay to Swartz Bay."

Passenger rail service needs to get back on track

by Avis Rasmussen Victoria, 19 July 2013

Not only cars are shuttled by rail between Britain and Europe — and around Europe — but also bicycles, wheelchairs and millions of people. Also, in mainland Canada and the U.S., I've travelled by train between Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal to New Haven, Conn.

I buy Britrail and Eurail Flexipasses along with my air tickets so when I get to Heathrow, de Gaulle or Leonardo da Vinci airports, I simply take the train downtown or, with the latter to Perugia, from there a two-car train like the E&N to Umbertide. No stress.

I can sketch as the train whisks along while others work on their computers, read, eat, converse, sleep or walk between cars, which can have two levels. Stations, as well as ticket offices, have restaurants, shops, other facilities, taxi and bus connections.

"Where is the E&N?" asked a tourist from Colorado last Sunday as he stopped by my Artishow Fairmont Empress Hotel table. "I want to take my wife and kids up to Qualicum where I went last time I was here."

Get the E&N back on the track, provide good services, car-bike-transport, advertise and book worldwide. E&N is (can be) a Malahat-Vancouver Island travel choice and brisk business solution.

Previous Suggestions:

Eight mayors on board for Salish Express train

Service would roll in 2013, linking Victoria, Langford and Cowichan

BY BILL CLEVERLEY, TIMES COLONIST JULY 11, 2012

Eight local mayors want the Capital Regional District to pony up for a plan to help get a commuter train running on the E&N rail line. Having a train linking Langford and Victoria is very important, said Langford Mayor Stew Young. "It works very, very well for Langford. I just don't see spending a whole lot more money on the highway right now."

A commuter train service is seen as a way to reduce road congestion and to avoid spending more money on highway expansion. The requested \$70,000 in funding would go toward a \$98,800 "commuter rail implementation plan" for what's been dubbed the Salish Express.

A letter signed by the eight mayors - to be considered today by the CRD board - says the implementation plan will detail operating and capital costs for a two-year pilot service for a weekday commuter train between Victoria and Langford, and Esquimalt and Cowichan.

The plan would identify the type of train and its availability, station stops and costs, ridership demand Eight mayors on board for Salish Express train for the Esquimalt naval base and Victoria Shipyards, a fare structure, integration with B.C. Transit and a financial plan.

Last year, B.C. Transit released a study suggesting running a commuter train on the E&N line would not only be expensive, it likely wouldn't attract many riders. It found that, depending on the type of trains used, the cost of a one-year pilot to test such a commuter link would be between \$2 million and \$4 million. Estimated ridership would be about 97,125. And, B.C. Transit projected the operating cost per service hour at \$717 to \$1,257, compared with \$183 for the existing Cowichan Valley bus.

But Graham Bruce, chief operating officer of the Island Corridor Foundation, which owns the E&N Right-of-way, said the B.C. Transit assessment was really "just a collection of data" that wasn't complete.

"What this [plan] does is actually take the detail that you would have to do to put a pilot project together: costs, trains, all the parts and pieces, [and] lay it before people," Bruce said.

Young, View Royal Mayor Graham Hill and Metchosin Mayor John Ranns all said they wanted to see a more in-depth and "independent" assessment than the one provided by B.C. Transit. The commuter train would be in addition to a Via Dayliner service between Victoria and Courtenay.

Hill said a train would start from Nanaimo and pick up passengers en route to Victoria. Once in Victoria, it would shuttle between Victoria and Langford, "as the business case allows." "Then in the afternoon, it would do the same thing for the p.m. inter-city transport, with a final end-of-day transportation opportunity over the Malahat back to Nanaimo," he said.

Vancity Credit Union has committed to fund up to one third of the cost of the plan, which would take an estimated two months to complete. If the pilot were green-lit, it could be operational by September 2013.

The letter is signed by Young, Hill, Ranns, Colwood Mayor Carol Hamilton, Sooke Mayor Wendal Milne, Highlands Mayor Jane Mendum, Esquimalt Mayor Barb Desjardins and Sidney Mayor Larry Cross.

Because of the poor condition of the tracks, Dayliner service was suspended in April 2011 and no passenger trains have run on the E&N since then. Repairs to the tracks - estimated to cost \$15 million and to be shared equally between the federal and provincial government - are scheduled to start this summer. The earliest the Dayliner could be back on track is next spring.

Editorial note: That letter is supported by the November 2012 study commissioned by Mayor Stew Young titled: Langford Community Rail Service Assessment. However, we have found no report on the decisions of CRD in this matter. LS

Let private sector build inlet toll bridge

BY GORDON GREEN, TIMES COLONIST NOVEMBER 13, 2011

Re: "Inlet toll bridge only Malahat solution," Nov. 5.

The writer has it exactly right. The Malahat has reached its physical limits, with no practical way to expand its capacity. The rest of the Island is growing rapidly. Traffic to and from the provincial capital will only increase, creating more fatalities and highway closures.

A bridge across the narrow portion of the Inlet at Squally Reach would have two advantages. First, it would cut the distance between downtown Victoria and Mill Bay by a third. Second, property expropriations would be minimal, as the roadbed on the Victoria side already exists. The new Willis Point Road, which leaves West Saanich Road just north of Prospect Lake, runs almost to the Inlet at Gowlland Tod Provincial Park, close to the presumed takeoff point.

To be sure, there will be engineering challenges. But the real problem is money, not technology. So let's turn to the private sector. Follow the course charted by the Guinness family, who built Vancouver's Lions Gate Bridge, or the developers of toll Highway 407 in Toronto. Incorporate a right of first refusal for government to repurchase the bridge at a future date, with an attractive minimum return for the original investors. "They will build."

Rail only solution to Malahat delays

BY JAMES GRAYSON, TIMES COLONIST NOVEMBER 10, 2011

Every workday, thousands of motor vehicles carry commuters over the Malahat, and once in a while, there is a serious crash. Any crash of any magnitude usually results in temporary closure for an extended period of time. It seems that any delay over 37 seconds is considered too long. Each delay usually brings forth a list of possible solutions.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient space to widen the present highway, there is no suitable new corridor reasonable close to the present highway, the idea of sitting on a crowded bus does not appeal to a lot of business commuters, having a ferry on standby in case it is needed is not economical, a bridge would have to clear-span the Saanich Inlet so as to protect the tidal flushing of the inlet and neither of the existing roads could handle the traffic to and from a four-lane bridge.

Most of the Malahat commuters drive to their workplace, park all day, and then drive home; the largest destinations are Dockyard and downtown Victoria. We should concern ourselves with moving these people. There is an abandoned rail line from Courtenay to downtown Victoria. Spend whatever is necessary to put several Dayliners on track from Duncan and beyond, across the new Johnson Street Bridge, at least as far as Wharf Street.

This would result in less pollution, less greenhouse gases, less personal stress at both ends of the day, less opportunity for highway crashes and less chance of excessive delays. The switch from car to train could be encouraged by the gradual and systematic reduction in dedicated vehicle parking spaces.

'Congestion charges' could push drivers out from behind the wheel

BY BENJAMIN GILLIES, TIMES COLONIST AUGUST 13, 2011

(excerpt) "For the Toronto scholars, the answer is to establish a congestion charge - a toll - that drivers pay for using roads. This is likely easier than ever in the digital age, as all vehicles could be equipped with some type of GPS monitoring device that tracks when and where citizens have driven, and charges them accordingly. If having free roads supports private automobile use, then this financial disincentive encourages citizens to find other means of getting around. A complementary measure would be to then invest in an improved system of public transit that includes more buses, lower fares, more dedicated bus lanes, more rapid transit lines, more park and ride stalls and more bike lanes.

Taken together, these two initiatives discourage travelers from contributing to the congestion problem, and make it more attractive to opt for more efficient (and more environmentally friendly) public alternatives."

The Benefits of Having the E&N in Operation

(excerpt from Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) and South Vancouver Island Rail (SVI) Funding Submission for Essential Safety Upgrades & Repairs to the Vancouver Island Rail Corridor - October 2010)

Once funding is approved, the work program can start immediately taking approximately 12 months to complete and will generate:

- 164 direct and indirect jobs (FTEs);
- \$7.7 million in wages and salaries;
- more than \$4 million in goods expenditures on Vancouver Island; and,
- potential job training and business opportunities for First Nations on Vancouver Island.

It will also generate:

- \$1.7 million in federal income taxes and sales tax (HST), having the net effect of reducing the requested contribution by 23%; and,
- \$1.0 million in provincial income taxes and sales tax (HST), having the net effect of reducing the requested contribution 13%.

This ICF request is critical to ensure the continued safe operation of the rail line, extended economic life of this historic transportation asset, and preservation for the future of this important transportation alternative upon which a variety of Island industries and both intercity and tourist passengers rely. This investment will also support the \$10 million investment made by VIA Rail for new passenger rail equipment as well as the more than \$37 million in facilities improvements on and around the rail corridor (e.g. public crossing improvements and walking / cycling trailways) that have been made or proposed (e.g. Johnston Street Bridge) by local governments, including grants from the federal government and the Province of BC. It will also lay the foundation for proposed new VIA service improvements and securing various new and expanded lines of business that are currently being developed.

Without the \$15 million requested for funding these essential repairs, continued rail operations cannot be sustainable. As the result will inevitably be the cessation of rail service on the Island, the ICF and SVI will be forced to immediately formulate an exit plan that will mitigate the negative impact on the rail passengers and industries they serve. It will also result in the loss of tourism business and an inter-city travel option provided by VIA rail, higher cost for goods shipment, loss of access to the Asia Pacific and North American Gateways for Island industries and other lost economic development opportunities. It will also result in:

- loss of 50 direct Island based jobs, \$3 million per year in wages and salaries and over \$2 million per year in goods and service expenditures associated with rail operations;
- cancellation of the new VIA Rail trains that are already in the process of being rehabilitated and for which there are no other immediate markets where they could be put into service;
- elimination of the growing Island rail tourism market that complements the more than \$14 million spent on trail development by local government and the Province of BC through its LocalMotion program.
- potential layoffs and/or closure of more than a dozen industries that depend on the rail service to carry over 116,000 tonnes of goods each year valued at approximately \$3.5 billion;
- loss of a valuable and irreplaceable freight transportation alternative to trucking on Vancouver Island; and,
- addition of a minimum of 6,000 truck trips per year and 90 to 160 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually on the Island.

ITO Conclusion:

The sooner ICF and SVI are funded, the sooner we will have the opportunity to take some freight and passenger traffic off the Malahat Highway.

Lloyd Skaalen
ITO Communications
IslandTransformations.Org