



**southwest  
economic alliance**

**One Strong Voice for  
Southwestern Ontario**

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2013-2014

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**Serge Lavoie**  
President, SWEA

September 16, 2013

**A REQUEST TO THE WARDENS, MAYORS AND COUNCILS OF  
THE COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO**

The Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) has noted a growing concern about the reduction in passenger transportation options available to the residents of Southwestern Ontario communities.

SWEA sought to address these concerns by convening a special meeting of mayors and other stakeholders located in communities most affected by VIA Rail cuts. At that meeting, held August 8, participants confirmed that the problem goes well beyond the VIA Rail cuts but includes the full range of inter-city transportation needs in the region.

It was agreed that an advocacy initiative was needed to create public support for re-investments in regional passenger transportation by both levels of senior government. A five point action plan was developed (see next page) and the SWEA board has agreed to coordinate efforts to undertake it.

As a first step in your community's engagement we are asking for your support of a Resolution (sample of which is on page 3). Beyond that, we encourage your municipality to give support for local or regional stakeholder groups with an interest in the issue. SWEA is interested in connecting with all such groups in an effort to coordinate research and messaging.

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SWEA has also arranged for an online petition as a means of engaging the general public on the issue. We would ask you to consider adding a link to the web-based petition on your own municipal web site and to promote it through local media. The link to the online petition is (<http://www.change.org/en-CA/petitions/southwestern-ontario-needs-transportation>).

Respectfully,

SOUTHWEST ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Lavoie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Serge Lavoie, President

### The SWEA Regional Transportation Five-Point Action Plan

1. Cutbacks to VIA Rail passenger service in Southwestern Ontario is a central and critical issue and SWEA, on behalf of the communities of the region, will:
  - a. Demand re-investments and service enhancements in the short term.
  - b. Advocate, for a renewed commitment to passenger rail service across Canada.
2. Lack of inter-city transportation options within the region is an equally critical issue. The following are the key requests that SWEA will make to the provincial government on behalf of the communities of the region:
  - a. That the provincial government support demands to improve VIA Rail services along both main lines.
  - b. That the provincial government immediately address regional passenger transportation issues beyond the current GTHA focus
  - c. That the provincial government support the establishment of an all-party committee of the Ontario legislature to immediately study regional transportation needs in Southwestern Ontario.
3. That SWEA seek to convene a high profile regional transportation summit in autumn of 2013 to draw attention to the critical issue of limited passenger transportation options in Southwestern Ontario with the intent is to kick-start a broad public debate on the issue and to spur immediate study of options and commitment to re-investments.
4. That SWEA engage all possible stakeholders, in partnership with communities in the region, to build awareness of passenger transportation issues and possible solutions.
5. That SWEA coordinate a meeting with senior VIA Rail management to get an accounting of their service strategy for Southwestern Ontario and to stress the need for the corporation to partner with regional municipalities meaningfully in efforts to improve passenger rail service and ridership levels in the region.



## RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A REGIONAL PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE FOR THE COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO.

WHEREAS the communities of Southwestern Ontario are alarmed at the declining level of passenger transportation options available in the region.

WHEREAS the Southwest Economic Alliance (SWEA) Regional Transportation Advocacy Initiative Committee held a meeting on Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at which it developed an Action Plan for the initiative and its key objectives.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL ENDORSES THE FOLLOWING:

1. Cutbacks to VIA Rail passenger service in Southwestern Ontario are a central and critical issue and SWEA, on behalf of the communities of the region, should:
  - c. Demand re-investments and service enhancements in the short term.
  - d. Advocate, for a renewed commitment to passenger rail service across Canada.
2. Lack of inter-city transportation options within the region is an equally critical issue. The following are the key requests that SWEA shall make to the provincial government on behalf of the communities of the region:
  - d. That the provincial government support demands to improve VIA Rail services along both main lines.
  - e. That the provincial government immediately address regional passenger transportation issues beyond the current Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area focus
  - f. That the provincial government support the establishment of an all-party committee of the Ontario legislature to immediately study regional transportation needs in Southwestern Ontario.

Please consider supporting this resolution, or one based upon it. Send a copy of your adopted resolution to SWEA at the address below. In addition, send it to all ministers of the crown, MPs, MPPs, and other stakeholders you believe should hear your views.

**Serge Lavoie, President**  
**Southwest Economic Alliance**  
**75 Locust Street, St. Thomas, Ontario N5R 2C3**  
**Via e-mail: [slavoie@swea.ca](mailto:slavoie@swea.ca)**

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