



Region of Waterloo

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June 20, 2012

The Honourable Steven Fletcher, MP
Minister of State, Transport
Room 304 Justice Building, House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Fletcher:

We are writing this letter to encourage Transport Canada and the Federal Government to maintain rail passenger service along the Guelph Subdivision, which connects London, St. Mary's, Stratford, Kitchener, Guelph and Halton Hills to the Greater Toronto Area and beyond. There have been several news articles over the past few weeks that have alluded to a pending VIA announcement that will reduce service in this corridor from three trains per day to two trains.

This rail line currently services over 1 million people and there is a need to increase interregional rail service to support employment opportunities, tourism (including the Stratford Festival of Canada), and other business and personal passenger travel between our communities and the GTA. Currently the congested Highway 401 is the only means of access to the economic hub located in Toronto. Additional and improved rail passenger service will provide an effective and attractive travel alternative to Highway 401 and will assist with reducing congestion. It will also advance the important environmental and regional development objectives established by the Government of Canada.

In 2009, GO Transit completed an Environmental Assessment Study for Rail Expansion between Georgetown and Kitchener and forecasted rail passenger volumes in this corridor ranging from 2,300 to 5,000 daily trips in the short term and approximately 9,000 to 16,000 daily trips by 2031. We understand that the introduction of limited GO Train service to Kitchener has resulted in some shifting of customers between VIA and GO, but there is a significant market in this corridor that is untapped as demonstrated by the above GO Transit study. The current service of three morning trains (two GO and one VIA) from Kitchener to Toronto is below what would be considered a reasonable frequency to attract new ridership. Removing one of these trains will further impact the potential ridership and will impact communities such as Stratford and St. Mary's that do not have GO service.

There are several ways to increase VIA Rail ridership along this important economic corridor:

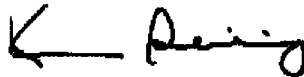
1. **Improve travel times** – It currently takes about 1 hour 45 minutes for a VIA train to travel from Kitchener to Union Station. Through track improvements and installation of signals this travel time can be reduced making rail service more competitive with the automobile. In 2007, the Federal Government announced a new funding package for VIA Rail Canada to revitalize inter-city passenger rail service in Canada. Of the funds totalling \$691.9 million over five years, it is our understanding funding was allocated to the London, St. Mary's, Stratford, Kitchener, Guelph, Halton Hills corridor. As far as we are aware, none of this money has been invested in this rail corridor and much of it was diverted to other parts of the country.

2. **Increase service** – In order to encourage more people to take the train, they need to have multiple convenient choices. Additional service is required to provide the necessary choice to increase ridership. If potential customers have to wait a couple of hours for the next train after finishing a meeting, event or appointment, they will drive.
3. **Introduce VIA and GO co-fares** – By permitting passengers with GO passes to board VIA trains by purchasing ticket upgrades, an additional choice is provided for potential customers. There are synergies that can be developed if VIA and GO work together on a co-fare system that could increase ridership on both services.

We wish to express our concerns about the potential reduction in VIA Rail service to this important economic region and state that it would be most unfortunate should this service be lost. We encourage the Federal Government to continue to consider this corridor as an investment priority and do all within its power to maintain and increase service and to continue with planned track and signal improvements.

We believe there is considerable urgency to this matter, and would appreciate your office looking into this as soon as possible, and advising us what can be done to ensure that service is maintained or enhanced in this corridor. We appreciate your consideration of this request

Yours truly,



Ken Seiling, Chair
Regional Municipality of Waterloo



Rick Bonnette, Mayor/CAO
Town of Halton Hills



Steve Grose, Mayor
Town of St. Marys



Dan Mathieson, Mayor
City of Stratford



Joe Fontana, Mayor
Corporation of the City of London



Carl Zehr, Mayor
City of Kitchener



Brenda Halloran, Mayor
City of Waterloo



Karen Farbridge, Mayor
City of Guelph

cc: Hon., Denis Lebel, Minister of Transportation
Hon. James Flaherty, Minister of Finance
Harold Albrecht, MP Kitchener-Conestoga
Stephen Woodworth, MP Kitchener Centre
Peter Braid, MP Kitchener-Waterloo
Marc Laliberté, VIA Rail

Gary Schellenberger, MP Perth-Wellington
Michael Chong, MP Wellington-Halton Hills
Frank Valeriote, MP Guelph
Susan Truppe, MP London North Centre
Ed Holder, MP London West
Irene Mathyssen, MP London-Fanshawe