
Subject: Restoring Passenger Rail Service - Sea-to-Sky Corridor

From: FR Jelfs <REDACTED >
Sent: Wednesday, May 1, 2024 10:57 AM
To: Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@princegeorge.ca>
Subject: Restoring Passenger Rail Service - Sea-to-Sky Corridor

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City of Prince George Mayor Simon Yu,
City of Prince George Councillors:

Dear Mayor Yu and Prince George City Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of Transport Action British Columbia (<https://bc.transportaction.ca/>), a public transportation advocacy group. We are requesting your support of the District of Lillooet's efforts lobbying the province to reinstate Sea-to-Sky passenger rail service. (<https://www.piquenewsmagazine.com/local-news/district-of-lillooet-repeats-calls-for-rail-passenger-service-8405648>).

To that end, we are forwarding a letter sent to Minister Fleming supporting Lillooet's request. We are also calling for integrating reinstated passenger rail with a rescheduled Prince Rupert-Prince George-Jasper *Skeena* passenger train, and with BC Transit, BC Bus North, Health Connections buses, private bus operators and VIA Rail.

There are two points in our letter to the Minister that may be of interest to you in your efforts.

1. The British Columbia Federation of Labour and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) recently published a comprehensive passenger transportation report that includes recommending passenger rail reinstatement (<https://bcfed.ca/connecting-bc> or <https://policyalternatives.ca/connecting-bc>).
2. Ontario is leading by example by reinstating the Toronto-Timmins-Cochrane passenger train with modern equipment (<https://www.ontarionorthland.ca/en/travel/northlander-passenger-train>). Why not here in British Columbia?

Thank you for your time. Please feel free to reach out to us if we can be of help.

Sincerely,

Rick Jelfs
Secretary – Transport Action British Columbia
REDACTED
<https://bc.transportaction.ca/>

Our letter to the Minister follows:

The Honourable Robert Fleming,
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Dear Minister Fleming,

Over twenty years ago the Campbell Government, shortsightedly in our view, dropped BC Rail's *The Cariboo Prospector* passenger train service as a precursor to its sale of BC Rail to CN Rail. Interior communities lost a direct and convenient connection with Vancouver.

It is time to bring back passenger rail service because of the loss of intercity bus service; increasing climate extremes leading to wildfires, flooding and landslides severing roads and/or leading to mass evacuations; and the need to help Interior communities grow. And passenger rail would provide an environmentally sustainable option to increasing congestion and collision caused road closures on Highway 99. Communities like Lillooet want the rail passenger service back ([Lillooet wants passenger rail links to Whistler and beyond - Pique Newsmagazine](#)).

We are asking you to study the benefits and costs of restoring improved passenger train service with integrated links to BC Transit, BC Bus North, Health Connections buses, private bus operators, and VIA Rail, and operated with modern, attractive, accessible low-environmental-footprint equipment.

We ask this evaluation to engage the Federal government to improve *The Skeena* passenger train beginning with fare and schedule integration with the bus operators. In the future, a re-equipped and expanded *Skeena* could connect with the new *The Cariboo Prospector* and intercity bus to provide faster, direct service between the Interior and Vancouver and to the eastern Interior, Jasper and Edmonton. An overnight train from Prince Rupert would avoid the costly, inconvenient, and ridership-discouraging hotel stay in Prince George. It would complement intercity and local daytime bus services, providing integrated service for residents and visitors.

One of our directors, Prince Rupert resident Kathleen Palm created and is distributing this excellent schedule card showing the different services between Prince Rupert and Prince George on the same page (pictured below). This is the kind of integrated information that should be available to public transit riders now.

The BC Federation of Labour (<https://bcfed.ca/connecting-bc>) and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (<https://policyalternatives.ca/connecting-bc>) have produced an excellent report, Connecting BC, which calls for passenger rail reinstatement between Vancouver and Prince George and interconnect it with a network of intercity buses. We urge you to review and implement the report's recommendations. Connecting BC provides a starting point for the above requested feasibility study.

A return of rail passenger service to routes once abandoned is not unheard of in Canada. Ontario's Progressive Conservative government is bringing back *The Northlander* passenger train between Toronto, Timmins and Cochrane (<https://www.ontarionorthland.ca/en/travel/northlander-passenger-train>) after a similar short-sighted abandonment over 10 years ago. The new *Northlander* will feature state-of-the-art equipment.

So why not here?

Thank you for your time. Feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance.

CC: The Honourable Dan Coulter - Minister of State for Infrastructure and Transit

Rick Jelfs,
Secretary – Transport Action British Columbia

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<https://bc.transportaction.ca/>

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EASTBOUND

PRINCE RUPERT → TO PRINCE GEORGE

SUN : VIA RAIL TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM

MON : NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM

TUES : BC BUS NORTH TO PG - 8AM (WITH PORT EDWARD - 8:15AM); FRIENDSHIP HOUSE BUS (TO TERRACE ONLY) - 10AM

WED : VIA RAIL TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM; NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM

THURS : NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM; FRIENDSHIP HOUSE BUS TO TERRACE ONLY - 10AM

FRI : VIA RAIL TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM; BC BUS NORTH TO PG - 8AM (WITH PORT EDWARD - 8:15AM)

SAT : NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE GEORGE - 8AM

WESTBOUND

PRINCE GEORGE → TO PRINCE RUPERT

SUN : NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM

MON : VIA RAIL TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM; BC BUS NORTH TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM; NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM

TUES : FRIENDSHIP HOUSE BUS (TERRACE TO RUPERT ONLY) - 2:30PM

WED : NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM

THURS : VIA RAIL TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM; BC BUS NORTH TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM; FRIENDSHIP HOUSE BUS (TERRACE TO RUPERT ONLY) - 2:30PM

FRI : NORTHERN HEALTH BUS TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM

SAT : VIA RAIL TO PRINCE RUPERT - 8AM

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book here:

VIA RAIL - 1.888.842.7245
 BC BUS - 1.844.564.7494
 FRIENDSHIP HOUSE BUS - 250.627.1717
 NORTHERN HEALTH BUS - 1.888.647.4997
 HAIDA GWAI EAGLE TRANSIT - 1.250.559.4461
 BC FERRIES - 1.888.223.3779

With support from:

**TRANSPORT ACTION
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

For transportation advocacy please visit Transport Action BC online at bc.transportaction.ca