



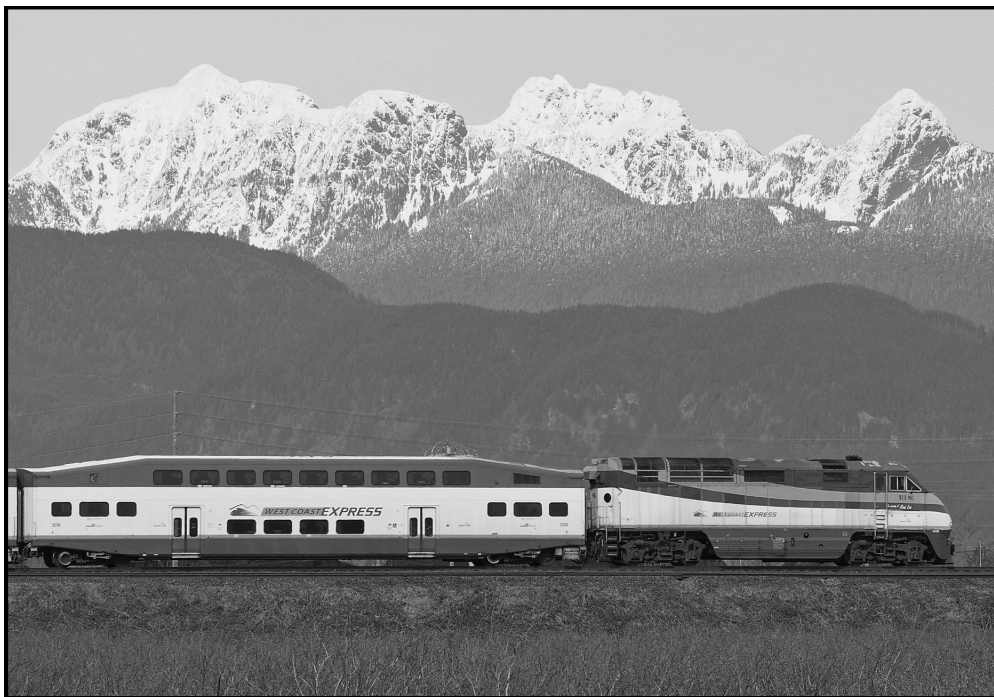
THE SANDHOUSE

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- ♦ West Coast Express at 25
- ♦ CPR's Agassiz Local — a fast forerunner

THE SANDHOUSE



The Sandhouse is the official publication of
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Press Date — November 23, 2020

Front cover: *Confirming that West Coast Express runs through the most dramatic scenery of any Canadian commuter rail line, F59PHI WCE 905 leads eastbound train E1 at Mile 109.5 of CP's Cascade Subdivision in Pitt Meadows, B.C., on November 4, 2017, as Mt. Golden Ears looms above. (Photo by Ian Smith)*

Back cover: *With nine driving cab cars in the WCE fleet, but only five trains in the timetable, some will be marshalled at inner positions in a consist. A commuter passing between cars might come face-to-face with the business end of such a car, wearing a bold yellow chevron for crossing safety. In this case, the photographer has encountered the cab end of car WCE 101, seen from conventional car 207, while the train awaits departure from Waterfront Station on April 25, 2018. (Photo by Ian Smith)*

To Our Readers

Twenty-five years seem to have gone by in little more than the proverbial blink of an eye.

I still remember clearly the days when commuter rail service for the northeast sector of Greater Vancouver was just a political football, and then quickly became a fast-tracked project, going from a demonstration run for local officials in June 1993 to a go-ahead announcement by the B.C. government in May 1994 and then an operating reality in November 1995.

Now, a quarter-century later, West Coast Express is well established and has just passed a special anniversary.

Our coverage starts with a close look at the past five years, following on from earlier reports at similar intervals.

Reviewing the entire 25 years in a detailed text would take more space than The Sandhouse can provide, so instead this span of time is covered in pictorial fashion, starting with some views of the events of 1993 to 1995, and coming right up

to the present.

Following that, Barrie Sanford presents the story of a train that might surprise many readers, a CPR train that had its own quarter-century of service in similar territory to WCE.

CPR's Agassiz Local operated from 1907 to 1932, running at a clip that still measures up well against the running of West Coast Express.

There are plenty of Short Hauls news items to round out the issue, and we hope all of this gives you plenty of interesting reading material as the pandemic and the approach of winter keeps you close to home.

Ian Smith,
Editor

Division News

The precautions for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic continue to derail the usual public gatherings of groups like CRHA Pacific Coast Division, and it's now clear that by year-end we will have met only once in the past 12 months, that being the February meeting. We must hope that with effective vaccines being made widely available at some point next year, we'll be able to resume meeting as normal by next autumn, if not sooner.

The Division has taken advantage of a special provision offered by the Registrar of Companies to delay our 2020 Annual General Meeting, which had been scheduled for March 20. We have been authorized to hold that meeting at any time up to November 1, 2021, and in all likelihood both the 2020 and 2021 AGMs will be held consecutively on the same date. Official notice will be given in due course.

Obituaries

Since the last issue was published, we were saddened to learn that three Division members had died since the autumn of 2019.

John Cheslevy of Vancouver passed away on September 25, 2019, at the age of 93. John was a long-time member who had joined the Division before it was incorporated as a society in 1983. A regular attendee of Division meetings until his eyesight prevented him driving at night, John nevertheless continued to be active for many years with the Telephone Committee, including a term as its head.

Paul Jeffries of Cardiff, Wales, died on March 6, aged 71. Paul joined the Division in 1994 and had been the only current overseas member. His interest in Canadian railways was kindled by regular visits to relatives living in B.C., and he attended several Division meetings during such travels. After a long career with Britain's major telecommunications company, Paul capped off his working years with a stint as a train service planning and timetabling manager with the regional railway system based in Cardiff. He made several contributions to The Sandhouse, most notably a long feature article in the Summer 2018 issue that detailed his cross-country trip on VIA's *Canadian*, on what proved to be his last visit to Canada.

Bob Langford of Surrey passed away on November 11 last year at the age of 88. Bob was a Division member only briefly, having joined in 2018, but had been a long-time reader of The Sandhouse, which he purchased regularly at Central Hobbies. He had begun his career as a railroader, then worked as a union officer, before moving on to labour relations positions with the B.C. and federal government, and finally in the mining industry. Bob's life-long hobby interests took him all over the world on travels focused on both live and abandoned railways.

We offer our condolences to the families and friends of our departed members.



YEARS AGO IN THE SANDHOUSE

40 Years Ago (October 1980 issue)

- BC Rail receives its first four SD40-2 locomotives, Nos. 751-754.

35 Years Ago (October 1985 issue)

- VIA Rail's *Super Continental* returns to service between Vancouver and Winnipeg.

30 Years Ago (September 1990 issue)

- Public hearings seek input on a future rail transit line to Richmond.

25 Years Ago (September 1995 issue)

- CPRS 9508 and 9509 are the first AC4400CW units to arrive at Coquitlam, September 17.

20 Years Ago (September 2000 issue)

- Electric operation on BC Rail's Tumbler Subdivision ends on October 1.

15 Years Ago (Autumn 2005 issue)

- CP 8700 and 8705 are the first ES44AC locomotives to reach Coquitlam, November 7.

10 Years Ago (Autumn 2010 issue)

- CP reaches 10-year contract with its largest customer, coal shipper Teck Resources.

5 Years Ago (Autumn 2015 issue)

- New SkyTrain map downplays Evergreen Line name of extension coming in 2016.
- CN and BNSF operate new Tier 4-compliant locomotives in Vancouver area.
- 10 Okanagan Wine Train cars sold after 12 years in storage in Kelowna.
- Ex-CN 2-8-0 No. 2141 runs again on Kamloops Heritage Railway after 3-year overhaul.

West Coast Express rolls past quarter-century milestone

by Ian Smith

Canada's only heavy-rail commuter service west of Ontario has passed the quarter-century mark, having carried 45 million passengers since it opened on November 1, 1995, operating on Canadian Pacific Railway tracks between Mission City and Vancouver.

Serving the northeast sector of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, West Coast Express continues to have a place in the range of transit options for that area despite the arrival of the SkyTrain rail service four years ago.

The 25th anniversary passed with little fanfare, the date falling on a Sunday when trains do not operate and coming at a time when service and ridership have been greatly depressed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

WCE chose to mark the occasion on the final three days of the preceding week at Waterfront Station in downtown Vancouver, with souvenir give-aways such as baseball caps, tote bags and protective face masks with appropriate logos.

The service's history was recalled in a long article posted to the Buzzer Blog at the website of TransLink, the regional transit authority that has been WCE's parent since 1999. (During its first four years, WCE had been a unit of the provincial agency, BC Transit.)

The Sandhouse has covered WCE in depth since it was mooted in 1993, and substantial updates have been published at previous anniversaries in 2005, 2010 and 2015, so this article will look back mainly at the previous five years. Some earlier events dating back to the beginning are depicted in a pictorial feature that follows.

Our coverage of the 20th anniversary in 2015 coincided with the expiry of the 20-year service agreement between WCE and CP as of October 31. Covering such functions as track access, dispatching and other operational services, that confidential agreement had been made public in 2002 following a two-year freedom-of-information battle that was decided in the B.C. Supreme Court.

A successor agreement had been reached just 10 days before the 20-year deal expired, but even that fact was kept under wraps for a time. Acknowledgement that a new "long-term agreement" between CP and TransLink had been reached in October 2015 was first disclosed in TransLink's 2015 Statutory Annual Report, published in March 2016.

But no details were revealed, not even the length of the new contract, as CP insisted the terms be kept confidential, despite the fact that the original deal had been made public after a court ruling.

It would take another FoI tug-of-war to bring the new deal into the public domain, this time taking three years, and the main terms were published in *The Sandhouse of Summer 2019* (pp. 30-36). For details, readers are referred to that issue, but the key points can be noted here.

The term is for 10 years to October 31, 2025, and the deal includes a clause allowing for it to be renewed by mutual consent on the same terms for further 10 years. If that is not agreed, negotiations for a successor agreement are to start on November 1, 2024.

The timetable embedded in the contract is the

same as at the conclusion of the first 20-year deal, namely five trains in the main commuter direction between Mission City and Vancouver on weekday mornings and five homeward trains in the afternoon, taking 75 minutes each way.

Counterflow service involving trains travelling against the direction of commuter traffic is specifically ruled out, whereas the original deal had been silent on that subject.

The most noteworthy aspect of the new contract is a performance-based payment schedule that rewards CP for better on-time running than the agreed standard, but also penalizes the railway for substandard timekeeping. The standard calls for 98.2% of services to operate on time, as measured by arrival time at Waterfront in the

morning and at Coquitlam Central in the afternoon (the figure is based on delays caused by CP).

Under this arrangement, the payments to CP are based on both monthly and annual performance, with the overall payment for achieving base performance throughout a year amounting to \$5,585,112 in the first year of the contract (amounts are indexed annually for inflation and a historical factor).

If CP hit the maximum performance target in every month and for the year as a whole, the total payment would be \$6,335,112. At the other extreme, the overall payment could be as low as \$3,710,112.



The quarter-century milestone was marked by souvenir give-aways at Waterfront Station October 28-30. Staff prepare to greet homeward-bound riders on the last afternoon of the event. (All photos by Ian Smith)

The new contract had been negotiated against a backdrop of steadily declining on-time performance, with January 2015 marking the worst running since the service had begun more than 19 years earlier. That month, only 87% of trains arrived on-time (defined as within five minutes of scheduled time plus allowable headway). That inauspicious start to 2015 was the prelude to the worst yearly performance to that date, at 95.6%. The year saw 773 delays, of which 670 were attributed to CP. Including 2015, the annual average for the first 20 years was 97.7% (based on all causes of delay).

With the new contract kicking in on November 1, 2015, offering new incentives to CP for better

performance, stronger results might have been expected in 2016, but as that year wore on, the outcome deteriorated. In the first nine months, 400 delays were recorded, 311 caused by CP. Then, more than 80 hours of delay were experienced by 60 trains in 47 days between October 1 and December 8.

Those figures were cited in a letter by the Mayors Council on Regional Transportation sent to federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau in mid-December.

The mayors had also written to Mark Redd, CP's vice-president of operations for Western Canada, who gave them cold comfort in his response, saying: "The congestion issues we are now facing means it is time to think about the



F59PHI locomotive WCE 901 stands ready at Waterfront to haul the first train of the afternoon eastward on October 30 in a scene mostly unchanged from 25 years earlier. But the locomotive lost the West Coast Express herald on its right side during a spot repainting job in 2008.

future of freight and passenger services co-existing on the two tracks. These issues will not be easily resolved.”

Some behind-the-scenes negotiations must have taken place, as by January 18 TransLink chief executive Kevin Desmond was telling reporters: “CP has turned the corner on that and they are providing much more reliable access to us.”

CP said on the same day that it was “committed to providing West Coast Express customers with the timely service they expect in 2017.”

On-time performance for 2016 came in at 95.3%, a new annual low, but improved to 97.2% for 2017. The figure dipped in 2018, to

96.7%, and remained at that level last year. (These figures represent delays from all causes, such as WCE equipment failure, not simply those attributable to CP operations.)

The general improvement from 2015 is reflected in passenger responses. Complaints per million passengers amounted to 335.2 in 2015 and 314.7 in 2016, but declined steadily to 89.0 in 2019.

Other major contractual arrangements for WCE operations remain in place.

VIA Rail continues to provide locomotive and car maintenance and car cleaning service, as it has from the start-up in 1995. After CP relinquished the contract to provide operating crews,



After an on-time arrival at Port Haney, the train on the opposite page departs for its final stop at Mission City. Cab car WCE 105, trailing on this eastbound run, was one of only five WCE cars on hand for opening day in 1995. The other four trains that day were formed from a fleet of 18 bilevels leased from Ontario's GO Transit.

Bombardier Transportation took over that role in May 2014, starting with a five-year contract valued at \$17 million, with options to renew for another three terms of the same length. The first renewal has apparently happened, as trains are still crewed by Bombardier employees, but no announcement was made at the start of the second five-year term.

The most significant change for WCE over the past five years has been the arrival of another rail service in a large part of its catchment area, Port Moody and Coquitlam.

SkyTrain's Millennium Line was extended into central Coquitlam in late 2016, with service

starting on December 2 (see Autumn 2016 issue, pp. 6-19).

This gave commuters the option of a much more frequent service that operates nearly 20 hours a day on weekdays, compared with WCE's relatively short windows of service in one direction during peak hours only.

But the quality and duration of the ride is different, with WCE from Coquitlam Central taking 30 minutes to reach Waterfront in downtown Vancouver, with only one stop en route and the almost certain availability of a seat.

By comparison, a SkyTrain ride from the adjacent station at Coquitlam Central would take 50



An eastbound WCE train (left) departs Moody Centre station in the afternoon of March 30, 2017, some four months after SkyTrain's Evergreen Extension opened. At right, a two-car Mark II set approaches the station on an outbound run to Lafarge Lake-Douglas in central Coquitlam. Passengers can transfer using the overhead walkway.

minutes, including a transfer en route and 17 stops and starts at intermediate stations, along with the possibility of having to stand for part of the journey, particularly in the homeward direction when starting from downtown.

Another SkyTrain station was opened at the site of the former WCE station at Port Moody, which was rebuilt to serve both rail modes and renamed Moody Centre.

The coming of SkyTrain resulted in larger parking lots at the two joint stations, with 415 spots added at Coquitlam Central (for a total of 1,060) and 85 at Moody Centre (total 393). (Altogether, six suburban WCE stations have 2,259 parking

spots; only Port Haney has none.)

As shown in the table below, WCE ridership dropped from 2,459,000 in 2016 to 2,323,000 in 2017, the first full year of extended SkyTrain service. But WCE patronage had already dropped sharply from 2,649,000 in 2015, likely attributable to the increase in train delays noted above.

A TransLink analysis comparing monthly figures for September of 2016 and 2017 showed that SkyTrain ridership had jumped 10.6% but WCE had slipped by 10.4%, while all other transit modes had seen increases.



WCE passengers began using the new station building at Port Moody some seven months before SkyTrain service began. This view on May 12, 2016, looks eastward. Stairs and escalators inside the enclosed area at right take passengers up to the walkway over the SkyTrain lines. This is the only WCE station to have been rebuilt.

By 2018, WCE ridership had turned upward, and rose again in 2019 to 2,607,000, although that's still below 2015 and earlier years as far back as 2008, which marked the first time that ridership had exceeded 2.6 million.

While SkyTrain may have siphoned off some WCE ridership from Port Moody and Coquitlam, the joint stations there offer convenient connections that did not previously exist. For example, a commuter from Maple Ridge traveling to Brentwood in Burnaby can transfer from WCE to SkyTrain at one of those points and make the journey in 50 minutes, station to station.

Opening of the SkyTrain extension coincided with the demise of the only service expansion that WCE had seen since its inception.

The basic train service of five trains each way was augmented in September 1999 with a single bus journey in the homeward direction, using a highway coach contracted from Gray Line of Vancouver. Called TrainBus, it departed Waterfront at 19:20, exactly an hour after the last train, thus providing an option for commuters

whose working hours prevented them from catching the final train.

The lack of such a choice had been identified as a deterrent to gaining new commuters from WCE's catchment area.

The full journey to Mission City took 105 minutes by bus, stopping only at WCE stations. That compared with 73 minutes by train, but TrainBus was an immediate success.

The service operated in fits and starts, being suspended for 16 months from September 2001 owing to budget cuts, but had been offered continuously after reinstatement in January 2003, with various operators. It peaked in 2009 with two inbound and five outbound trips on weekdays, two round-trips on Saturdays and three on Sundays (see Winter 2016/17 issue, pp. 34-44).

This zenith of service would last only two years, followed in 2011 by reduction of weekday service to one inbound trip from Mission and a shorter run starting from Port Haney, along with only three of the five homeward trips going the full distance to Mission City and the two others terminating at Port Haney. Weekend service was

West Coast Express by the numbers

Year	Ridership	Daily average
2019	2,607,000	10,400
2018	2,485,000	9,900
2017	2,323,000	9,300
2016	2,459,000	9,850
2015	2,649,000	10,600
2012	2,872,000*	11,700
2010	2,782,000	10,500**
2005	2,104,000	8,400
2000	1,927,000	7,700
1997	1,600,000	6,400

*This table presents WCE ridership figures for the past five years and for regular intervals between 1997 and 2010; *2012 included to show the peak of ridership.*

***2010 daily average has been adjusted to reflect additional trains and days of service during the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.*

Figures for 2017 onward reflect SkyTrain's Evergreen Extension opened on December 6, 2016, and cancellation of TrainBus service at year-end 2016.

eliminated.

That was the level of service when the SkyTrain extension opened in late 2016, by which time TransLink had decided that TrainBus would die as of December 30.

TransLink's rationale was that WCE commuters from the Tri-Cities would now have SkyTrain as an option that operated until after midnight on weekdays. Those living east of the Pitt River could connect from SkyTrain to buses for destinations in Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge.

But another solution was needed for riders to and from Mission, which lies outside of TransLink's jurisdiction and did not have bus service to points west along the WCE route. The upshot was the extension of four journeys in each direction of TransLink bus route 701 that normally runs between Coquitlam Central and Haney. Those four trips run non-stop between Haney and Mission on weekdays and are sprinkled throughout the service day.

TrainBus statistics aren't easy to come by, the latest being from 2012 during the final level of service, when 70,600 passengers rode the bus. Those using the substitute service of the 701 bus aren't counted as WCE riders, of course, so the change had the effect of reducing the WCE figures by about 250 passengers per day.

A less prominent change resulting from the SkyTrain extension was the cancellation of the Home Run program on October 1, 2017. For an annual fee, this program provided "emergency daytime travel insurance" for a WCE monthly pass-holder who needed to get home unexpectedly during the workday because of a family or medical emergency and couldn't wait for the trains to start running. The insurance covered the cost of three taxi rides per year.

The program had been started in 1997, but demand had dropped over the years as transit options increased, with the SkyTrain service to Coquitlam being the last straw.

Featuring bold WCE graphics, Cantrail Coach Lines No. 850 stops at Pitt Meadows station on a run to Waterfront on the last day of TrainBus service, December 30, 2016.



With WCE entering its third decade, attention turned to the state of its locomotive fleet, as five of the six units date back to the start of service in 1995.

In mid-2016, a capital plan for improvements to TransLink's services included adding one new locomotive and five new coaches for WCE. That has since evolved into what is called Phase 2 of TransLink's 10-Year Transportation Plan, which covers refurbishment of the existing locomotives, followed by acquisition of 10 new coaches at a later stage.

Public release of a consulting report by SNC-Lavalin in 2018 detailed the work that needed to be done on the locomotives.

For the five F59PHI units built in 1995 (numbered 901-905), the SNC analysis concluded that they require "life-extension and rehabilitative maintenance work" owing to their age and normal wear-and-tear, which could extend their service life by 10 to 15 years. Work should include installing new diesel engines and alternators, full overhaul of the trucks, and corrosion repairs.

That's expected to take four to five months per unit, with the whole project taking 12 to 14 months.

WCE's sixth unit is a one-off, an MP36PH-3C built in 2006 by Motive-Power Inc. (numbered 906). SNC's analysis states that it has some corrosion and collision damage, but "a basic mid-life overhaul" within two to three years would suffice in this case.

A key to the rebuilding program is the acquisition of two used locomotives to serve as a "float" while the WCE units are taken out of service. SNC estimated the cost of such used units at \$2.7 million to \$3 million each (by comparison, WCE's five original units cost \$3.3 million each in 1995 dollars).

Although funding for the locomotive refurbishment was approved in 2018, the project appears to be stalled because of difficulties in finding the used locomotives for the float.

In TransLink's 2019 Statutory Annual Report, a note on page 29 states that most of the \$10.5 million allocated to this project remained unspent owing to "unavailability of locomotives to purchase in the market, which in turn caused delays in the . . . procurement process and project schedule."

Ironically, with WCE service reduced to three trains during the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps it could have been possible to operate without the float locomotives and yet free up a couple of locomotives at a time to be sent for refurbishment.

Regardless, the locomotive fleet remains in dire condition, and the failure of No. 904 in mid-January this year, with No. 902 already out of action since early December, led to the cancellation of trains W1/E5 for two days because VIA Rail was unable to provide a spare, as it is contracted to do in such emergencies. After a week-end break, W1/E2 were cancelled for two days in the following week, with trains W2/E5 lengthened to make up for the reduced capacity.

No. 904 returned to action on the fifth day and normal five-train service resumed, but No. 902 would not be back in service until mid-February, some 10 weeks after it was sidelined, meaning that no spare was available to cover for other emergencies in the meantime.

Clearly, this situation needs to be remedied if WCE is to maintain its reputation for reliable service.

The other element of WCE's equipment is its fleet of 44 Bombardier bilevel cars.

The main development here in the past five

years was a decision to buy out the lease of the original 28 cars, built in 1995/96 at a cost of \$55 million. These had been leased from Pitney-Bowes Leasing and it cost TransLink \$20.8 million to buy out the lease in 2015, but that was offset by savings in future lease payments of \$13.2 million, for a net cost of \$6.6 million.

Rounding out the fleet are nine cars delivered in 2000-01 and seven received in 2010. These 16 newer cars feature smooth sided-bodies rather than the riveted construction of the originals.

As noted, TransLink's 10-Year Plan includes the purchase of 10 new cars, but that has yet to be funded. Based on recent purchases of Bombardier bilevels by two U.S. transit authorities, the cost would be in the region of \$50 million Canadian.

The current fleet consists of nine cars with driving cabs (Nos. 101-109), 29 coaches (206-220, 301-309 and 401-405) and six "Coffee Cars" (201-205 and 406).

The latter are equipped with facilities for serving coffee, tea, juices, soft drinks and snacks at a counter area on the lower level. This takes the space used for the washroom in the conventional coaches.

When WCE introduced these cars soon after start-up in 1995, they were unique among the five transit authorities then using Bombardier bilevels. In April 1996, car 201 was sent south to Burlingame, Calif., for the commuter rail conference of the American Public Transit Association, where it was shown off to delegates from



WCE 902-905 lead an eastbound Sun Run excursion special across Kanaka Creek Bridge at Mile 101.5 of CP's Cascade Subdivision in Maple Ridge on Sunday, April 22, 2018. A single unit could handle the train, but doubleheading such weekend special runs has become standard practice as a precaution in case of locomotive failure.

other agencies.

Snack service on the homeward-bound afternoon trains was cancelled in 2012, as passengers could buy similar items from a canteen trailer on the platform at Waterfront. Service on the morning trains continued until July 2018, when it was determined to be no longer economically viable.

Through the period under review, WCE continued to run excursion trains on well-established weekend occasions – for the Vancouver Sun Run on a Sunday in April, for the Saturday finale of the annual fireworks festival in mid-summer, and Santa Trains for the Christmas season on the first two Saturdays of December.

Canada's sesquicentennial anniversary in 2017 fell on a Saturday and WCE responded with its first-ever Canada Day excursion, drawing 550 riders in each direction.

These weekend excursions now routinely operate with two locomotives, presumably to cover for the possibility of a breakdown when no other trains are running (on weekdays, other trains could come to the rescue). This offers railfans a rare opportunity for photos of a doubleheaded train.

The COVID-19 pandemic had broken out before the first 2020 excursion date arrived, and all have been cancelled for this year.

The pandemic's impact on WCE is far greater than that, of course, having reduced regular ridership to a fraction of what it was even in the first years.

Under normal circumstances, WCE operates with 41 of its 44 cars in service. Before the outbreak, the five trains were formed as follows: W1/E5, four cars; W2/E1, eight cars; W3/E3 and W4/E4, 10-cars; and W5/E2, nine cars. Trains were running on the same schedule adopted in 2011, taking 75 minutes in either direction.

As the pandemic began to bite, Trains E2/W2 were cancelled on March 26, and the consists reshuffled, with a 10-car consist taken out of service. At that point, ridership had dropped by 80%, to 1,100 in each direction, which allowed for 25% occupancy of the 31 cars remaining in service.

Then, on April 8, Trains W4/E4 were cancelled and their 10-car consist withdrawn. That reduced the active fleet to 21 cars spread over three trains, with a capacity of about 3,100 seats.

April 22 saw the remaining three consists cut to a mere eight cars altogether, the lowest point of pandemic ridership. One train had just two cars, the others three each. Total capacity was about 1,160 seats, and boardings amounted to about 200 per day in each direction.

The low point continued for six weeks before the first train lengthening took place in the first week of June, as daily boardings had tripled to 600 in each direction. The busiest train (W3/E3) was increased from three to four cars, and the next week the shortest train (W1/E5) grew from two cars to three.

By late July, the three trains had 14 cars combined. In late September, TransLink said that WCE ridership was at 17% of normal levels, and by early October there were 16 cars in operation, with five cars in Trains W5/E1, seven in W3/E3 and four in W1/E5. Those formations have continued through the press date for this issue.

Thus, through highly unexpected circumstances, WCE ridership at the quarter-century mark is far below what it was at the very beginning. Before the pandemic struck, WCE's customer satisfaction survey had shown steadily improving results.

As detailed in TransLink's 2019 Statutory Annual Report, 92% of passengers had given good-

to-excellent ratings for overall satisfaction, up from 90% in the 2018 report.

More specific ratings had also improved, such as for on-time reliable service (88% vs. 83%), good connections with other modes of transit (70% vs. 67%), value for money (68% vs. 66%), frequency of service (68% vs. 60%), and delays announced and explained (76% vs. 70%).

Over four years, customer satisfaction on a scale of 10 had risen from 8.1 in 2015 to 9.0 in 2019.

So with 24 years of experience, WCE's riders clearly had positive views about the service.

But the 25th year brought the pandemic, which had been entrenched for eight months by the

time the anniversary was reached. And that has changed everything.

What lies ahead? In such unusual times, there is no firm foundation for predictions of the future.

In TransLink's ridership announcement in late September, other modes were well ahead of WCE's 17%, with SkyTrain at 38%, Canada Line at 31%, and buses at anywhere from 37% to 55% in different parts of the region. That is to be expected, given that WCE's ridership is closely tied to commuting for work purposes, whereas the other modes also serve leisure, shopping and social travellers.

During the pandemic, a shift to working from home has become common throughout the world, particularly for office workers whose



Cab car WCE 103 brings up the rear of the shortest consist seen during the pandemic, just two cars for six weeks from late April. Here, on April 23, it trails in Train E5 at Mile 100.3 in Albion.

tasks can be accomplished from their residences if they are equipped with suitable technology. This surely includes a segment of WCE's regular riders.

In various jurisdictions in the developed world, this has had a similar impact on commuting by rail, with ticket revenues severely depressed and a shift away from monthly and weekly passes as many commuters travel to the office only intermittently. That threatens to whip up a vicious downward spiral of service, revenue and ridership.

Will this shift to working from home become permanent and more pronounced?

By the time WCE reaches the 30-year mark, perhaps such questions will have been settled. But the tracks ahead are far from clear.



Off the beaten track. This is a route that paying WCE passengers do not see — CN's Burrard Inlet Line, used by trains on movements between Waterfront Station and VIA's Vancouver Maintenance Centre for inspections, servicing and equipment swaps, usually on Wednesdays between revenue trips. Seen looking south from the Parker Street grade crossing, a deadheading train led by cab car WCE 101 picks its way along the tracks while returning to Waterfront on May 31, 2016.

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(All *Sandhouse* articles above by Ian Smith)

2019 Statutory Annual Report, South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority (TransLink)

WCE pictorial — 25 years plus

This pictorial survey of West Coast Express history looks back more than 25 years because the current service — there were earlier proposals — dates back to 1993, when a demonstration run on two possible routes jumped off the drawing boards to give the concept a tangible form for decision-makers to consider. Our photo coverage begins with that trip.



What is now called West Coast Express took a step closer to becoming a reality on June 19, 1993, when CP staged two demonstration runs between Vancouver and Mission to show off the concept to political leaders, government officials and transit planners. Using RDC-2 self-propelled diesel railcar CP 91, the demonstrations started from Waterfront and ran to Mission using the all-CP route eventually adopted.

On the return runs from Mission, the trains diverged on to CP's Westminster Subdivision at MacAulay in Port Coquitlam and ran to CP Junction in Sapperton. There they took the Burlington Northern route through Burnaby and Vancouver used by VIA trains. At Burrard Inlet Junction, where VIA trains diverge for Pacific Central, the demonstration runs continued up the BI Line (see photo on page 18) to return to CP trackage and continue on to Waterfront.

The second run of the day is seen from behind while stopped at VIA's Port Coquitlam Station, before continuing east to Mission. (Photos by Ian Smith except as noted)



Political leaders must have liked what they saw on the demonstration runs, because another VIP group was back at Port Coquitlam on May 18, 1994, to hear B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt officially announce commuter rail service between Vancouver and Mission. Bilevel cab car 2304 for San Diego's Coaster service was diverted from Bombardier's Thunder Bay factory to give flesh to the announcement and provide short runs on the mainline alongside CP's freight yard. Just 16 months later, below, the Port Coquitlam commuter station is taking shape on September 10, 1995, a mere seven weeks before service was to start. A remnant of the VIA station was left standing to provide electrical service to contractors.





The first car in the West Coast Express fleet, cab car 101, is positioned at the platform of the still-incomplete Port Coquitlam Station for a display to local municipal officials on October 18, 1995, just two weeks before opening day on November 1. Below, the great day has arrived, with F59PHI No. 903 at Waterfront at 08:35 after propelling the morning's fourth train in push-pull mode.





This is a rare scene indeed, as the final train of the opening morning is being pushed back into the layover yard, with the cab car facing eastward. This was the VIP train for politicians and media, and ran with the locomotive at the head-end to present a more conventional view of the train for the cameras. Below, the first train of the afternoon is being positioned at the platform. Service started with 18 cars leased from Ontario's GO Transit, which were formed into four trains; only the five-car train above was formed with WCE coaches. The GO and WCE cars were not inter-operable, so the formations were kept separate. As enough WCE cars were delivered to form another train, a GO set was withdrawn. The last one ran on March 15, 1996.





For overnight storage of trains, a three-track layover yard was built just east of the Mission City Station, seen here on October 29, 1995, just three days before start-up and before fencing was installed. That date saw trains ferried out from CP's Coquitlam Yard, where they had been stored previously. The view below shows the extension grafted on to CP's 1914-built station to serve WCE.

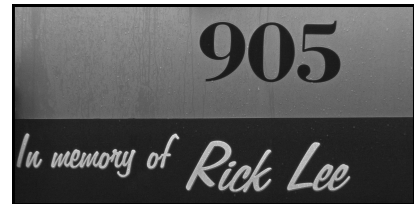




WCE first expanded its 28-car fleet by leasing three bilevels from Miami's Tri-Rail for 26 months from September 1998. The cars were wrapped in vinyl graphics displaying the WCE livery, but the driving ends of the two cab cars kept their original look, seen on car 506 at Port Coquitlam on September 29, 1998. Built to GO Transit specs, the cars were not inter-operable with WCE's own.

Leasing of F59PHI unit SDRX 906 from Seattle's Sounder commuter service in July 2000 gave WCE its first dedicated spare unit. The arrangement lasted five years. It's seen here plugged into "shore power" at Waterfront on March 28, 2001.





WCE's most elaborate anniversary celebration was the 10th, on November 1, 2005. At a mid-morning ceremony at Waterfront, WCE 905 was named "In Memory of Rick Lee", after the late official who had led the BC Transit project team. Guests then boarded a special train that ran non-stop to Port Coquitlam, where staff and present gathered for a group photo (image courtesy WCE).





F59PHI WCE 904 backs its train into VIA's Vancouver Maintenance Centre on May 6, 2009, a Wednesday, which is the usual day for such servicing. Below, on May 2, 2012, a new glassed-in shelter has just been installed at Port Coquitlam, which still has its original station sign. The inset photo shows the new style of sign at Waterfront in December 2018, in TransLink's system format.





From the start, VIA's maintenance contract with WCE has called for it to supply a spare locomotive when needed. That practice continues with F40PH-2D unit VIA 6415 leading 10-car Train E3 at Mile 100.4 in Albion on June 11, 2018. Below, the unique MP36PH-3C unit WCE 906, bought new in 2006, hustles 9-car Train E1 through the same location on February 13, 2019.





Approaching the Albion signals at Mile 99.6 on April 24, 2019, Train E5 appears to be on a collision course with a westbound CP grain train on the north track, but in fact the CP freight is stopped to wait for E5 to take the crossover turnouts to reach the south track. Co-existence with busy CP traffic is a fact of life for the commuter service, and limits its opportunities for expanding service.

Cab car WCE 103 is at the rear of the train on the page opposite (bottom), 13 miles from journey's end, with only the Mission City riders still aboard. Heavy-rail commuter service like West Coast Express copes better with snow and ice than other transit modes, and winter service is usually reliable.



CPR's Agassiz Local — a fast forerunner of WCE

by Barrie Sanford

Craigellachie and its famous last spike were nearly two years in the future when the Canadian Pacific Railway began running revenue trains on its tracks in the Fraser Valley.

Tracks east of Yale, the upper limit of navigation on the Fraser River by steam-powered paddle-wheelers, were being constructed by American contractor Andrew Onderdonk on behalf of the federal government, which had offered to turn this trackage over to any consortium willing to undertake the risky transcontinental railway project. In early 1881 the CPR was chosen to carry out the work.

The CPR soon signed its own contracts with Onderdonk to build the railway from Port Moody to Yale and from Savona to Eagle Pass. Work on the line between Port Moody and Yale went speedily and the last spike on this section was driven near Deroche on January 22, 1884.

It is not known exactly when regularly scheduled train service commenced on the CPR trackage in the Fraser Valley. However, the perilous financial state of the CPR at the time would likely have induced the railway to generate revenue wherever possible, even if limited to unscheduled mixed trains.

Among the early shippers were the farmers of the Fraser Valley, who wished to take advantage of the great demand for milk, grain, animal fodder, vegetables and fruit in the rapidly growing cities of Vancouver and New Westminster.

Historically, this traffic had been handled by the paddle-wheelers on the Lower Fraser River. Vessels such as *Beaver*, *Favorite*, *Hamlin*,

Paystreak, *Ramona* and *Transfer* worked the river between Agassiz and Steveston.

However, such service had its shortcomings. It took many hours for vessels to travel upstream, especially during spring freshets. Stops at landings en route for loading or unloading cargo added to the slowness of the journey. Most seriously, the river vessels served only New Westminster, not the rapidly growing centre of Vancouver.

By contrast, CPR trains ran right into the heart of downtown Vancouver.

But train service had its own shortcomings. At first, the CPR opted only to make stops with its sole passenger train — its transcontinental “express” — which was scheduled to pass through the Fraser Valley westbound in the morning. The frequent and lengthy stops in the valley annoyed transcontinental passengers, especially those hoping to catch a *Princess* ship to Victoria or an *Empress* ship to Asia later that same day from Vancouver.

More seriously, the westbound express was often delayed in the mountains. This was highly detrimental to milk shipments. Farmers were often forced to return their milk to their farms for cooling rather than leave the cans in the hot sun at the local station for a delayed train. In some cases the delay was so long that the milk had to be discarded.

Agitation for a dedicated train for farmers grew steadily in the new century.

The CPR initially resisted public demands for such a train but eventually bowed to public pressure, and on September 16, 1907, the train made its first run. This was just before the CPR opened its new steel bridge over the Pitt River on October 24.

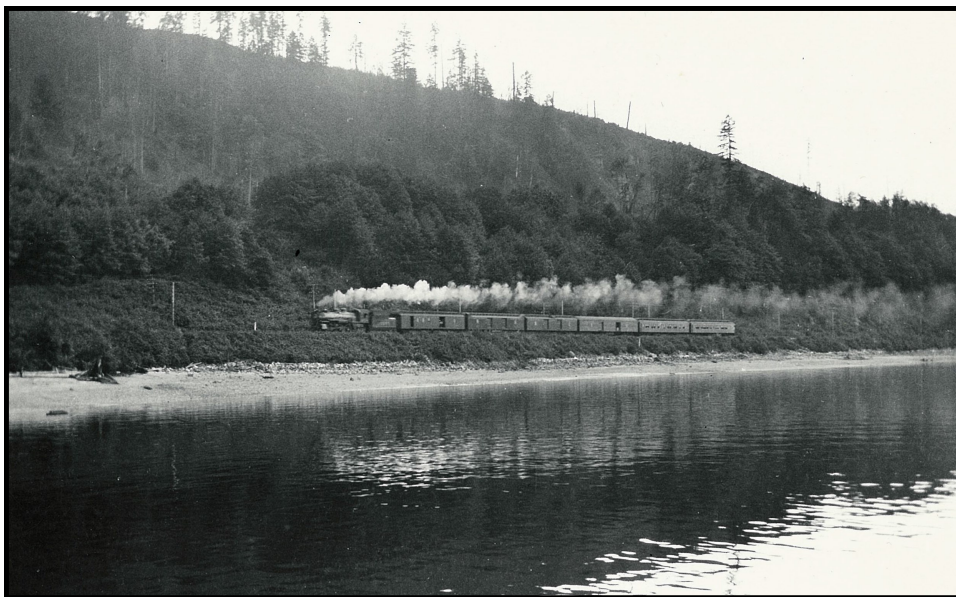
Officially the train was named the *Fraser Valley Local Passenger*, but throughout its quarter-century of operation it was universally known by CPR employees and the public alike as the “Agassiz Local”.

The train was numbered in the low 700s – initially 703/704 but later 705/706. While displaying all the appearance of a Mixed Train, it was always shown in CPR timetables as a First Class Train, entitling it to priority on the rails.

The Agassiz Local consisted of several baggage cars and one or two day-coaches. It was scheduled to leave Agassiz at 07:00 each morning and arrive at Vancouver at 10:00. It left Vancouver at 18:15 for the return journey.

This was a remarkably fast schedule for a train on the busy, single-track railway, even more so considering the train diverted from the mainline at Mission to run 10 miles south to Huntingdon and back before resuming its journey to Vancouver or Agassiz. The train’s average speed, including stops, was a nearly unbelievable 30 miles per hour.

The Huntingdon leg lasted only three years because the British Columbia Electric Railway opened its Fraser Valley Line to Chilliwack in



This photo by pioneering Vancouver railfan Ken Merilees was taken from the Shell Oil pier on Burrard Inlet in Burnaby, showing the eastbound Agassiz Local running along the shore on July 3, 1927. The long plume of steam trailing from CPR 4-6-2 locomotive No. 2585 indicates the train is making good speed with its four baggage cars and two coaches. When the author showed this photo to a veteran CPR historian, the latter exclaimed: “That’s the cutest train I never knew existed!” (Author’s collection)

October 1910 and took over the milk shipments from the Abbotsford area. Prior to the introduction of the Agassiz Local, much of the milk produced on area farms had been shipped to Sumas, Wash., across the border from Huntingdon.

The new train was instantly popular with Fraser Valley residents, and a station was opened at Pitt Meadows specifically for this service. However, the CPR did not share the public's enthusiasm, and for several long periods during 1908 and 1909 the train did not operate.

With the CPR now running two transcontinental trains daily and the Vancouver-Mission-Sumas-Seattle train – soon to be joined by the Kettle Valley train via the newly opened line through Coquihalla Pass – railway management apparently deemed train service in the Fraser Valley to be adequate.

This pattern of inconsistent service was to characterize the train's operation throughout its life.

The opening of the BCER's Fraser Valley Line not only spelled the end of the Huntingdon diversion for the train, but many farmers in the Agassiz area began taking their produce on the ferry across the Fraser River to Chilliwack for shipment to Vancouver on the BCER. Even more damaging to train patronage was the 1915 opening of a road bridge across the Pitt River, making transportation of produce by truck to Vancouver an attractive alternative for famers.

In its initial years, the locomotive and rolling stock of the Agassiz Local stayed overnight at Agassiz, but the eastern terminal was soon changed to Ruby Creek, 10.8 miles to the east.

Ruby Creek was at the eastern end of the double track from Vancouver opened in 1914, stretching 81 miles from the city, and had an employee bunkhouse and coal tower, whereas Agassiz had only a water tank. This move was unpopular with train crews, as Ruby Creek had few family amenities, such as stores or a school, unlike Ag-

assiz, which was a well-developed community.

Many details of the Agassiz Local operation have been lost in time. The author has seen only one photograph of the train, which accompanies this article on page 31. Ken Merilees, who took the photograph, said the train's empty baggage cars were set out at stations on the afternoon eastbound run and loaded by farmers overnight. The inbound morning train picked up the loaded cars.

This procedure eliminated any delay associated with the often-tedious task of loading the baggage cars, especially when the produce of one farmer had to be kept separate from that of other farmers. One news report stated that, at its peak, the Agassiz Local was carrying 500 to 600 cans of milk daily. With such perishable cargo, this was one of the few local CPR trains in British Columbia to operate on Sundays.

On New Westminster market day (usually Friday), a baggage car and coach were cut out of the train at Coquitlam (then known as Westminster Junction). From there, the local Westminster Branch mixed train would take them to the Royal City, and then return them in the afternoon. These extra switching responsibilities made the train's schedule even more amazing.

Passenger and freight traffic on the Agassiz Local, as with rail traffic everywhere, suffered with improved roads and then the Great Depression that started in late 1929. Another significant blow came in June 1931 when Pacific Stage Lines greatly expanded its bus service on the north side of the Fraser River, running as far east as Agassiz. The share of traffic hauled by truck steadily eroded traffic on the local train.

From news reports we know that the Agassiz Local was still running in early 1932, but no mention of the train appears in local papers or public timetables after that date. The author was unable to establish the exact date when the last train operated. By the time the Depression and

This extract from a CPR timetable of January 1931 shows Trains 705 and 706, the Fraser Valley Local Passenger.

The train served 22 stations between Vancouver and Ruby Creek while sharing the tracks in the Fraser Valley with three other passenger trains and numerous freight trains in each direction (owing to space limitations, only one of the other passenger trains is shown).

Note that the Vancouver-Mission journey was scheduled at 1 hr., 39 min. westbound and 1 hr., 45 min. eastbound, with 12 intermediate stops.

Today's West Coast Express makes that journey in 75 minutes in each direction, with six intermediate stops.

The Agassiz Local covered the Vancouver-Port Moody journey in 31 minutes westbound and 28 eastbound, compared with 25 and 24 minutes, respectively, for WCE.

Between Vancouver and Haney, the Local took 65 minutes westbound and 63 eastbound, compared with WCE's 56 and 54 minutes, respectively.

World War II had run their course, the world and travel patterns had changed dramatically and the Agassiz Local had become only a memory.

For today's passengers riding West Coast Express, the journey between Vancouver and Mission takes 75 minutes in either direction, with six stops along the way. It's fascinating to think that, a century ago, a 4-6-2 steam locomotive piloting the Agassiz Local covered the same distance with a dozen stops in just 24 to 30 minutes more.



Prior to the completion of the CPR in 1885, the dominant means of transport in southwestern British Columbia took the form of steam-powered paddle-wheeler river boats such as this one transiting the CPR's Mission Bridge on its way downstream. Much of the traffic handled by the Agassiz Local was previously carried by river vessels. Some of those that worked the river between Agassiz and Steveston are listed on page 30, but despite the efforts of numerous historians, the vessel in the photo cannot be positively identified. (Author's collection)



It's still possible to travel from Vancouver to Agassiz by train in normal times, but only two or three times per week depending on the season. The trip on VIA Rail's Canadian is timed at 2 hr., 3 min. eastbound. This scene on May 25 this year is not in normal times though; this train is deadheading to Toronto en route to maintenance inspections in Montreal during the pandemic shutdown. VIA maintains a basic flagstop station here, and the original station building seen above now houses a museum and has been turned so that its front faces the street, not the tracks. (Photo by Corwin Doeksen)

In a rare throwback to the days of the Agassiz Local, a steam-hauled West Coast Express excursion operated twice between Port Coquitlam and Mission on May 4, 2002, behind CPR H1b Hudson No. 2816. The second run is seen westbound at Port Hammond.

(Photo by Ian Smith)



SHORT HAULS

The Events of Today are the History of Tomorrow



A spectacular derailment of a westbound CP potash train west of Hope on CN track sent 61 hoppers off the rails early on September 14, closing the line for three days.

The incident occurred at a bridge over Hunter Creek near Mile 48.1 of CN's Yale Subdivision, near the point where the creek flows into the Fraser River.

Some cars fell off the bridge, while others piled up in concertina fashion along the railbed. The derailment site is alongside the westbound lanes of the Trans-Canada Highway, giving motorists a close view of the mountain of potash hoppers and their spilled pink-coloured cargo.

CP train 603 had four locomotives and 200 loaded cars, stretching out to 9,693 ft. There were no injuries.

The line was re-opened 73 hours later on September 17. Work included removing the damaged span and installing a replacement. (Global TV/TSB)

Locomotives in heritage liveries are being used mark a key anniversary in CN's privatization.

The initial public offering of shares was launched on November 17, 1995, when CN's stock was listed on the Toronto and New York exchanges. When completed 11 days later, the Canadian government's ownership had been transferred to private investors.

At the time, it was the largest IPO in Canadian history, raising \$2.25 billion for the federal government. CN had been the country's largest and oldest Crown Corporation.

CN says \$1,000 of stock bought then would now be worth \$63,000.

On November 17, CN released a photo of its CEO, Jean-Jacques Ruest, posing with six locomotives at Montreal, all wearing a "CN IPO 25" logos on their cabsides. Five wear the colours of railways purchased since the IPO.

One of those purchases was BC Rail, which is represented by ET44AC locomotive CN 3115 in the red, white and blue "hockey stick" livery of the 1980s.

After a round-trip to Halifax, the locomotive left Montreal on November 20 leading CN intermodal Q18331 to Prince Rupert, scheduled to arrive November 24.

Other examples cover Grand Trunk (CN 8952), Illinois Central (CN 3008), Wisconsin Central (CN 3069) and Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (CN 3023).

Not included in the Montreal unveiling were two mother and slug pairs that have received major overhauls at Progress Rail's shops in Tacoma. GP40-3 units 4702 and 4728 (upgraded from GP38-2) and HBU-4 slugs 503 and 516 are being formed into mother-slug sets numbered 7600-600, in a green-and-yellow CN livery, and 7601-601, in Illinois Central black. (CN/Chris Marshall/Rob Smith/Dan Simmering/*Trains*)

Military tribute liveries will be worn by two

CN locomotives to honour the contribution of veterans and active service members.

ET44AC models CN 3015 and 3233 now wear a livery featuring a camouflage pattern on the long hood, which is normally solid black. Other elements of the special liveries are crossed Canadian and U.S. flags, poppies and yellow ribbons, and the message “Thank You for Your Service” in English and French.

Illustrations of the two locomotives were released on Remembrance Day, but the units were not due to enter service until later.
(*Railway Age*/CN)

CN has opened 3.7 miles of double track on the Skeena Subdivision about 10 miles east of Prince Rupert.

New timetable stations at each end of the double-track section are at Wilson (Mile 81.8) and Port Edward (Mile 85.5). (CN)

Trains operating north of Squamish have continued intermittently in recent months, despite the official shutdown of through traffic from Williams Lake south.

Upgrading of heavy electrical equipment at BC Hydro’s Bridge River power station at Shalalth has produced occasional movements to and from Squamish, and points south.

Ballast trains operated in the first two weeks of September, and a train went north to Shalalth carrying a new transformer on a depressed-centre flatcar on September 8. The two locomotives and cars remained there for a week, and came south on September 17 with an old transformer on the same flatcar, along with heavy steel components on other cars. In both cases, the transformers were shrink-wrapped.

In the meantime, CN track geometry car 1501 had run north in between those movements.

At some point later, two empty flatcars were delivered to Shalalth, with the two engines returning the next day with loads of poles from the Mt. Currie pole facility.

On October 25, two SD60 units ran north light engine and picked up the two flatcars from Shalalth, now loaded with scrap components, and returned the next day. (Trevor Mills/Corwin Doeksen)

Electric trucks are being added to CN’s fleet of road vehicles.

CN has ordered 50 class 8 electric trucks from Quebec-based manufacturer Lion Electric Co., which up to now has specialized in electric school buses. CN’s order is worth more than \$20 million.

Lion’s class 8 vehicles develop 470 hp and 2,507 ft-lb of torque, with a range of up to 170 miles and top speed of 65 mph.

The company claims that its trucks will cut energy costs by 80% and maintenance expenses by 60%. (*Financial Post*/Lion Electric)

CANADIAN PACIFIC

The unique Red Barn SD40-2F units made a reappearance in B.C. in August, some five years after they had vanished from the provincial scene.

The former CP 9021 and 9023 were both seen separately on B.C. lines this summer on CP work trains. Then, in early October, they travelled together across B.C. from Calgary with about 55 empty open hoppers, stopping en route for loading at the company's ballast pit at Walhachin.

From there, they ran west, reaching River Road in Maple Ridge on October 6. After laying over for the night on the mainline there, the next day they dumped ballast at various spots between Mileposts 109 and 82 of the Cascade Subdivision. CMQ 9021 led in both directions.

Stalwarts in B.C. coal service when they were introduced in 1988, the 25 full-bodied "cowl" locomotives with the Draper Taper feature were the flagships of the CP fleet until large scale-deliveries of AC4400CW units began in 1995. Numbered CP 9000-9024, all had been retired from the roster by 2016, with 10 sold to the Central Maine & Quebec Railway in 2015.

But history reversed itself earlier this year, when CP purchased the CM&Q for about \$40 million to create a route from Montreal to the Atlantic coast in New Brunswick and Maine, restoring its status as a true transcontinental railway.

At Brownville Junction, Maine, the 481-mile CMQ connects with the New Brunswick Southern Railway to reach Saint John, N.B., on former CP trackage now owned by the Irving Co., and with the Eastern Maine Railway to reach Searsport, Maine, on what had originally been the Bangor & Aroostook Railroad.

CP had sold off its line through Quebec's Eastern Townships and the state of Maine in 1995. A subsequent operator, the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway, had owned the section between St. Jean, Que., and Brownville Jct. that was the scene of the infamous derailment and explosion at Lac Mégantic, Que., in June 2013 (see Summer 2013 issue, pp. 34-35).

The CM&Q had purchased that section from the MM&A's bankruptcy in 2014 and set about acquiring a fleet that included the 10 Red Barns, numbered 9004, 9010-11, 9014, 9017 and 9020-24 (see Winter 2015/16 issue, p. 44).

CP is operating the CM&Q as a separate subsidiary, so these units retain their CMQR reporting marks, along with colourful heritage liveries derived from venerable Maine lines such as the Boston & Maine and Bangor & Aroostook.

Two leased AC4400CW units in the CMQ fleet also wear a grey and blue heritage livery, inspired by the Boston & Maine's colours. Numbered CEFX 1002 and 1006, both made appearances in B.C. in early September.

CP has already used the CM&Q route to run intermodal trains to and from Saint John during work stoppages at the Port of Montreal in August owing to a labour dispute. CP says it will invest \$90 million in the route over the next three years, with the aim of providing 24-hour service between Saint John and Montreal. (Corwin Doeksen/CP/Editor/ *Canadian Trackside Guides 2015 and 2016*)

Delivery of 60 SD70ACU units was completed on August 9, with CP 7058 and 7059 joining the roster, assigned to St. Paul, Minn., for maintenance.

Those two were rebuilt from Union Pacific 3551 and 3567, respectively, after the remaining 58 SD90-43MAC units of CP origin had been

rebuilt as CP 7000-7057. The rebuilding program was carried out by Progress Rail at its Mayfield, Ky., plant.

In the spring, CP had restricted SD70ACU locomotives from operating west of Calgary while electrical teething problems were ironed out, but that seems to have been lifted, with these units making regular appearances across B.C. The final unit in the order, CP 7059, was seen in Maple Ridge on November 1. (*Tempo Jr.*)

A container transloading operation will be established for Maersk shipping line at CP's Vancouver Intermodal Facility in Pitt Meadows next year.

CP will shuttle Maersk containers by rail to the 117,000-sq.-ft. transload centre from all four container terminals within the Port of Vancouver.

This process will enable imported goods to be transloaded from marine containers into the larger 53-ft. domestic containers typically used for both highway and rail transport within North America. All containerized commodities other than refrigerated goods will be handled.

Transloading near the port of entry avoids the need to ship an arriving marine container for a long distance to an initial destination before its contents are sorted for redistribution. Instead, the resorting can take place near the port soon after arrival, with the contents unloaded, then grouped with other goods going to the same destinations in North America, and repacked in domestic containers for onward shipping.

CP estimates the process of using rail shuttles between transload facilities and the port will eliminate about 100,000 truck movements



After laying over for the night at River Road, SD40-2F CMQ 9021 leads sister 9023 while making a smoky start to the day on October 7, which it will spend on ballast train duties. (Photo by Ian Smith)

annually from Greater Vancouver's roads. (CP-Maersk/The Loadstar)

Maersk has awarded its marine container rail business to and from the ports of Vancouver and Montreal to CP. The deal was announced on October 19, a month after the transload facility project noted above was made public. The multi-year deal starts March 1, 2021, and applies to both dry and refrigerated cargo. (CP)

Double-track on the B.C. side of the Continental Divide has been extended by 3,500 ft. to the west, and now ends at Mile 123.6 of the Laggan Subdivision. Station namesign Stephen has been relocated there from the previous end of double track at Mile 123.1.

To the east, a crossover track has been reinstated at Divide, some 6,500 ft. east of the previous location of Stephen, thus creating a 10,000 ft. "pocket" that enables long westbound trains to be stopped for brake inspections or to await a crew change.

The next siding to the west is Partridge, on a steep descending grade at the top of the famed Big Hill. That was the site of a fatal runaway on February 4, 2019, that killed three crewmen after they had boarded a westbound train that had stopped there for a crew change (see Winter 2018/19 issue, pp. 37-38). (CP/Ken Storey)

A third track is being added in Kamloops on the east side of town, starting from a point near the Vicars Road grade crossing to the junction with CN's Okanagan Subdivision track that leads to CN's yard in North Kamloops.

This will create what CP calls an "auxiliary track" of about 8,500 ft. long, on the north side of the existing double-track mainline, capable of holding a train without blocking traffic on the main.

The addition is in preparation for the coming change in coal train operation, which will see all

the coal traffic from Teck Resources' southeastern B.C. mines interchanged from CP to CN at Kamloops as of April 1 next year (see Winter 2019/20 issue, pp. 6-13). (eminence_grise)

A President's Train with CP supremo Keith Creel aboard made a circular trip from Calgary into B.C. and return in late August, with "town hall" sessions for employees held at stop-over points.

Departing Calgary on August 23, the train stopped in Golden for an employee session, then continued south next day on the Windermere Subdivision to Fort Steele, and then on to the Cranbrook Sub. for the next overnight stop at Fernie. There the unkempt and overgrown backtrack had been immaculately cleaned of vegetation and detritus in advance of the inspection train.

On August 25, the train continued via Crowsnest Pass and back into Alberta for a stopover and session in Lethbridge, before returning to Calgary on August 26.

Three class F-units – CP 1401, 4106 and 4107 – powered the 12-car train of maroon business cars. (Corwin Doeksen)

The Crowsnest division point at the B.C.-Alberta border has been reduced to insignificance, with the final tidy-up coming soon before the passage of the President's Train reported above.

Crowsnest marks the end of the Crowsnest Subdivision at Mile 101.1 and the start of the Cranbrook Subdivision at Mile 0.0.

In recent years, all yard tracks had been removed, leaving only a siding. There had once been a back-track to stable the Royal Canadian Pacific luxury train for an overnight stop.

The clean-up this year included removing the mobile bunkhouse that had not been used in recent years, as crew changes at Crowsnest had become rare. Instead, Alberta crews continue on to Sparwood at Mile 17.7 of the Cranbrook Sub. and return eastward from that point.

Also removed were the remaining signal masts for the obsolete Absolute Block System that had persisted on the Alberta side. (Corwin Doeksen)

Extended Service Range crewing has been instituted between Lethbridge and Fort Steele, with a single crew handling the whole run of some 189 miles, rather than changing off at the usual point of Sparwood.

To date, ESR trains have included some of the grain and potash trains that connect with Union Pacific on the border at Kingsgate, B.C.

Initially, a pilot has been aboard for the subdivision that is “foreign” to the run-through crew.

Normally, crews starting at Lethbridge Yard (Mile 7.9, Crowsnest Sub.) run to Sparwood (Mile 17.7, Cranbrook Sub.) and change there. That’s a distance of 110.9 miles (the Crowsnest Sub. ends at Crowsnest, Mile 101.1, and the Cranbrook Sub. begins there). Fort Steele is at Mile 95.6 of the Cranbrook Sub., so an ESR crew that runs through Sparwood is making a trip of 188.8 miles between Lethbridge and Fort Steele. (Corwin Doeksen)

CP’s annual Holiday Train is another casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the railway is compensating by making new video footage featuring its H1b class Hudson No. 2816, which had not been steamed since October 2013.

Recorded this month, the footage shows No. 2816 under steam with Holiday Train cars in maneuvers around the railway’s yard complex in Calgary. It will be incorporated into a “virtual concert” titled “Holiday Train at Home” that

will be performed at 17:00 Pacific Time on December 12 via CP’s Facebook page.

In conjunction with this, CP will donate \$1.24 million to food banks in 201 communities along its network.

This marks the first time since it was launched in 1999 that a Holiday Train has not run. In its first 21 years, the train has raised \$17.8 million and collected 4.8 million pounds of food for local food banks in communities along CP’s network.

CP said it intends to resume Holiday Train operations next year. However, the company says it has no plans to return 2816 to mainline operation. (CP/Trains.com)



The first woman to lead a Class 1 North American railway has been appointed to the top job at BNSF.

Kathryn Farmer will succeed Carl Ice as BNSF's president and chief executive officer on January 1, 2021.

Currently executive vice-president, operations, Farmer joined Burlington Northern in 1992 as a management trainee and has since held a wide range of leadership positions in BNSF's operations, marketing and finance divisions.

Ice is retiring after a 42-year career with the railway, capped off with seven years at the helm. He led the management team that oversaw the merger of Burlington Northern and Santa Fe in 1995. (*Railway Gazette International*)

Vancouver Island

Commuter rail for Victoria is given short shrift in the provincial government's South Island Transportation Strategy released on September 18.

The strategy classifies 23 transportation options by priority: 14 are of short-term priority, seven are medium-term and two are long-term.

The latter two are described as "Exploring the viability of future marine transportation corridors" and "Exploring the potential of commuter rail on the Island Rail Corridor between Westhills and Victoria." The phrase "exploring the potential" suggests only a further study.

Basic analysis of such a commuter service was included in the consulting report on the

Esquimalt & Nanaimo Railway Corridor released in the spring, in time to be considered in the report on the South Island Transportation Strategy (see Spring 2020 issue, pp. 28-32). (B.C. Government/Tom Box)



Annacis Island rail facilities served by Southern Railway of B.C. will benefit from a \$3.5-million federal grant to improve capacity.

The work will increase access to automotive terminals and off-dock facilities that handle marine containers.

Improvements will be made to three separate areas of SRY's rail network on the island, adding 1.2 km of new track, realigning track configuration and replacing existing rail with heavier rail. (*Inside Logistics*)



Limited service of the *Canadian* is slated to resume as of December 11, with the train operating once a week in each direction between Vancouver and Winnipeg only. Masks will be mandatory for passengers and staff.

The eastbound train will depart Vancouver on Fridays at 15:00, arriving at Winnipeg on Sundays at 22:00.

Westbound, the train leaves Winnipeg on Mondays at 21:30, reaching Vancouver on Thursdays at 08:00.

The *Canadian* has not run since the early onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with service

suspended as of March 13.

In announcing this limited service on October 20, VIA stated: "Passengers will be denied boarding our trains if they are experiencing symptoms similar to a cold or flu (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) or if they have been denied boarding for travel in the last 14 days due to medical reasons related to COVID-19."

The trains will offer both coach seating and sleeper accommodation in enclosed cabins, but there will be no access to the Park or Skyline dome cars. A statement on VIA's Facebook page says: "While passengers will be required to remain in their cabins to respect physical distancing, a reservation system will allow and control access to the Diner car."

Dining car service for breakfast and dinner will be available for sleeping car passengers, but lunch will be served in their cabins. For coach passengers, food cart service will be provided.

Sleeping car passengers will have the use of showers by reservation. (VIA/Tom Box)

Regular *Canadian* service is planned to resume in April, with two round-trips weekly between Toronto and Vancouver. As in 2019, there will also be an Edmonton-Vancouver round-trip once a week, operating as Trains 3 and 4. (VIA/"DrawingroomA")

Rebuilding of 17 stainless-steel cars by Bombardier Transportation has been cancelled two years after the project started, by mutual agreement of that firm and VIA Rail.

Reports in Quebec media in late September said that the parties had agreed the cars were too old and in too poor a condition to complete the work, which had been under way since 2018 at Bombardier's plant in La Pocatière, Que.

Work had already been suspended in the spring owing to "new structural issues" discovered by

that point (see Spring 2020 issue, pp. 36-38). VIA had awarded Bombardier a \$54-million contract in 2018 to upgrade the 17 coaches to provide full accessibility for disabled passengers (see Spring 2018 issue, pp. 42-43).

The contract called for each reconfigured car to be equipped with: two wheelchair lifts; two accessible spaces with anchoring devices; announcement display screens, including in the washrooms; and an accessible washroom. Also included was the installation of wi-fi devices, improvements to interior design, and mechanical upgrading of the heating system and various electrical components.

The specific cars involved in this contract have never been officially identified, but the number coincides exactly with the 17 numbered 8130-8135 and 8137-8147, built in 1946-47 for U.S. railways and rebuilt in 1992 by VIA after acquisition in the second-hand market.

No statement has been issued about a separate project involving 25 stainless-steel coaches being carried out by a different Quebec firm, CAD Railway Industries of Lachine, in a \$46-million contract. That work was less extensive and several cars from that program have already been released. (Tom Box/Editor)

The *Canadian's* future seems limited, according to VIA Rail's 2020-2024 Corporate Plan, which is dated September 30 but was released on November 9.

Aging equipment, the inability to run more frequent service, and the current four-day schedule are key reasons why some form of change is needed.

As the report puts it: "VIA Rail believes that in the long term, the service delivery and business model of the *Canadian*, its flagship long-distance train, as it is today, is not sustainable. The existing service cannot adequately serve either shorter distance travellers or the tourism

market.”

“A new solution to maintain and preserve services and provide Canadians mobility is required,” says the report, but does not propose any solutions.

It notes that the train’s ridership had dropped from 112,000 in 2012 to 82,846 in 2018, the last year to see three Toronto-Vancouver round-trips in the summer schedule. That is attributed to several extensions to the schedule, resulting from steadily declining on-time performance owing to CN freight congestion and major track projects. On-time performance for all of 2019 was just 55.9%.

The report makes clear that there will be no resumption of a third Toronto-Vancouver round trip each week in the summer. That was cut back to an Edmonton-Vancouver round-trip in the 2019 summer schedule.

VIA says that five train consists of stainless-steel equipment are needed to operate three Toronto-Vancouver round-trips based on the latest timetable. But changes coming to the terminal arrangements in Halifax will require reassignment of some of that equipment to the Montreal-Halifax *Ocean* service, making it impossible to form five consists for the *Canadian*.

As for the iconic Budd-built stainless-steel fleet, the report foresees the end of its service life, as follows:

“VIA Rail recognizes that despite the inherent quality of construction and intrinsic longevity of the stainless steel used, it is no longer reasonable to expect an extended service life from the Budd manufactured rolling stock equipment (HEP cars) that is approaching or has exceeded 70 years of age. At some point the effectiveness, usefulness and maintenance costs of any product will reach a point where replacement must be considered and unfortunately this also includes the HEP cars.” (VIA/Tom Box)

A 10-car deadhead equipment move left Toronto on September 13, bound for Jasper and Vancouver. Among the cars were two refurbished stainless-steel coaches, readily identifiable by their teal window band and yellow letterboard colours. Likely the first of their kind to reach Vancouver, they have been spotted at a distance in VIA’s storage tracks near Pacific Central Station. (Editor/Tom Box)

A short “hospital” train was run from Vancouver to Jasper to provide a replacement locomotive for VIA 6455, which had been damaged by a tree on November 18 while leading Train 6 from Prince Rupert. The incident occurred at Lucas, just east of Houston.

VIA 6426-6429 and observation car Banff Park left Vancouver on November 20. (Tim Stevens)



ROCKY MOUNTAINEER®

COVID-19’s impact on Rocky Mountaineer was revealed in an interview given by chief executive Steve Sammut to the *Kamloops This Week* newspaper published August 29, five weeks after the luxury train operator cancelled its entire 2020 season (see previous issue, pp. 50-51).

Next year's passenger volumes are estimated at 80,000, compared with the usual 100,000.

Of those, only 45,000 will be new business, with the other 35,000 consisting of passengers who had booked to travel in 2020 but had their trips cancelled after paying. Rocky Mountaineer did not offer refunds of payments already made, but instead will give credits of 110% of amounts paid that can be used in either the 2021 or 2022 seasons, provided the booking is made by November 30, 2021.

A later report in the same newspaper on September 16 cited a Facebook group started by irate customers who had been denied refunds, with a foursome from New Brunswick saying they had lost the entire \$34,000 paid for an eight-day package tour. Another person calculated that 45 customers in the group had collectively lost \$400,000.

Sammut did not divulge the total revenues involved, but said the company had achieved about 75% of its usual annual sales by February. All of those customers would have paid at least their 20% deposits; full payment is required within 60 to 46 days of the travel date.

The company's normal policy is to retain the 20% deposit if a customer cancels prior to 60 days before the travel date. If full payment has been made, half will be refunded if cancellation occurs at least 46 days prior to travel. Cancellations after that point do not receive any refund.

Sammut said that if the company had given refunds according to its policy, most of the remaining staff would have lost their jobs.

As it was, the company permanently laid off one-quarter of its 325 year-round employees, with another one-quarter laid off temporarily, and the remaining 162 working reduced hours with a cut in wages and benefits. Only about 25 of the usual 500 seasonal onboard staff were hired this year.

Sammut said that Rocky Mountaineer's finances should enable it to weather next year's season, as it had borrowed additional funds and cancelled certain external contracts. The latter were not specified, but the company had taken delivery of two converted Silver Leaf cars at the start of this year's planned season and no further orders had been announced.

The local tourism agency, Tourism Kamloops, said that spending by Rocky Mountaineer and its passengers on overnight stops accounts for about \$50 million, about 10% of total tourist spending in the city. (*Kamloops This Week*)

Expansion into the U.S. travel market is slated for next year, with a 10-week "preview season" of a two-day excursion run in Colorado and Utah.

Rocky Mountaineer plans to run 40 trains between Denver and Moab, Utah, from August 15 to October 23. In each direction, there will be an overnight stop in Glenwood Springs, Colo.

Prices start at \$1,250 US plus tax. Amidst the controversy over denial of refunds for cancellation of existing trains during the pandemic, the booking policy is lenient, requiring only a \$25 refundable initial deposit, compared with the usual non-refundable 20%.

The company's announcement does not specify what equipment will be used, but 10 cars were acquired last year from a Quebec tourist rail operator (see Spring 2019 issue, p. 50) and those might be intended for the U.S. operation. (Rocky Mountaineer)

Other Passenger

Chilliwack to Whistler in one hour by rail is the aim of a group of urban planners and academics who have formed an advocacy group calling itself the MVX Collective.

The initials stand for Mountain Valley Express, which would be a true high-speed line operating at up to 300 km/h on its own dedicated tracks for the entire distance, albeit mostly using existing highway and railway corridors. (*Ed. note: This assumes space is available within the rail corridors, which the private railways that own those corridors might well dispute.*)

Along the way would be nine intermediate stations – at Abbotsford, Langley, Surrey City Centre, Lougheed Town Centre, Commercial-Broadway, Waterfront, North Vancouver, Horseshoe Bay and Squamish. Four of those would have SkyTrain connections.

The cost would be stupendous, with simple preliminary estimates ranging from \$7 billion to \$16 billion, based on figures derived from the studies for Vancouver-Seattle-Portland high-speed rail. (By comparison, the 5.7-km Broadway Subway extension of SkyTrain is costed at \$2.8 billion.)

But its advocates argue that is far cheaper than building equivalent highway capacity, which they put at \$10 billion to \$51 billion. They say that the rail line would carry the equivalent of six lanes of highway, and reduce highway traffic by 20%.

The capacity of 7,560 passengers per hour per direction is roughly half that of SkyTrain's Expo Line, and the planners estimate daily ridership at 97,000.

The advocates' immediate aim is for the B.C. government to "commission a feasibility analysis for a passenger rail system in the South Coast [region]." From this would emerge "a

more accurate assessment of the benefits and realities of a passenger rail system." (Daily Hive/ www.mvx.vision)

Transit

The Burrard Inlet Rapid Transit

feasibility study for the B.C. government has identified five optional routes to the North Shore that warrant further investigation.

Three options involve tunnelling beneath the inlet

One of these would extend the Canada Line to Park Royal via the Lower Lonsdale area.

A second would extend SkyTrain from Burrard Station westward, crossing the inlet under First Narrows and then heading via Park Royal to the Central Lonsdale area

The third would take SkyTrain beneath the inlet from Brockton Point, also to Central Lonsdale.

Two options would run via a new bridge at Second Narrows to reach the Lower Lonsdale district. One would start at Waterfront Station, the other at Brentwood. Use of the existing Second Narrows bridge structure was ruled out on seismic grounds.

The analysis was carried out by the engineering firm Mott MacDonald. Results of the study will be fed into the Transport 2050 long-term planning study led by TransLink and the Mayors' Council of Regional Transportation. (B.C. Government)



Chief executive Kevin Desmond has given notice that he will resign in early 2021 after five years at TransLink's helm.

Desmond had headed the King Country Metro Transit system in Seattle for 12 years prior to joining TransLink, and says he will seek new opportunities in the United States. He has also served as chief of operations planning for New York City Transit. (TransLink)

A bicycle parkade opened at Maple Meadows Station on June 26, completing a TransLink plan to add 11 such structures to its transit network.

The parkades are glass-walled, enclosed structures that provide storage space for 45 bikes. Features include video surveillance, 24-hour illumination, a repair stand, and an air pump.

Entry through a secured access door requires the use of a Compass Card whose owner is pre-registered for the purpose. The fee is \$1 per day, capped at a maximum of \$8 for a month.

The West Coast Express station at Port Coquitlam already had a bike parkade. The nine others are at SkyTrain and Canada Line stations.

Installation of the parkades cost \$5.3 million, with the federal and B.C. governments paying a combined \$3.4 million and TransLink the remainder. (TransLink)

The use of copper on "high-touch" surfaces is being tested on four TransLink vehicles to determine its effectiveness in killing bacteria and viruses.

Various copper-based products and a protective coating called organosilane will be tried on two SkyTrain cars and two trolleybuses in a first for

the North American transit industry.

"Copper alloy surfaces are naturally antimicrobial with self-sanitizing properties," said TransLink in announcing the program on November 10 "Recent literature shows that copper alloy surfaces destroy up to 99.9% of bacteria and viruses within four hours."

Initial testing will last for four weeks. Twice a week, the surfaces will be swabbed and tested to determine the antimicrobial effectiveness of the products. After one month, the surfaces will also be assessed for durability.

The program is being funded by Teck Resources, which produces copper products. (TransLink)



The Broadway Subway Project advanced on September 3 with the B.C. government awarding a contract to the Spanish-Italian joint venture of Acciona and Ghella, which had been selected as the preferred bidder in July (see previous issue, pp. 52-53).

Contract value is \$1.728 billion. Total project cost is \$2.83 billion.

Work during the autumn will include completion of design, site preparation and demolition of buildings to be used for station locations and laydown, and utility relocations.

The project, which will extend the Millennium Line westward by 5.7 km, has launched a public website at www.broadwaysubway.ca. Some 5

km of the extension and all six stations will be underground, hence the “subway” branding.

The joint venture has been named Broadway Subway Project Corporation. (B.C. Government)

Official station names have been confirmed for the Broadway Subway section. Names and entrance locations will be as follows:

- ◆ **Great Northern Way–Emily Carr** – east side of Thornton Street, just north of Great Northern Way.
- ◆ **Mount Pleasant** – southwest corner of Broadway and Main Street.
- ◆ **Broadway–City Hall** – will use the existing entrance to the Canada Line at the southeast corner of Broadway and Cambie Street. Connection between the lines will be underground.
- ◆ **Oak–VGH** – southwest corner of Broadway and Laurel Street, near Oak Street.
- ◆ **South Granville** – northeast corner of Broadway and Granville Street.
- ◆ **Arbutus** – northeast corner of Broadway and Arbutus Street.

Two of the names have been modified since the interim names were announced a year earlier (see Autumn 2019 issue, pp. 46-47). Emily Carr has been added to the Great Northern Way name and Oak has been substituted for Fairview at the VGH station.

The Evergreen Extension references were dropped from SkyTrain’s maps and “wayfinding” materials at the start of the year, without any fanfare to draw attention to the change.

That put an end to the pretence that the 11-km extension into Coquitlam would have a special identity, with the change coming scarcely three years after it opened in December 2016.

The Evergreen Line name had been chosen in a public contest in December 2005, when the new route was intended to be built as a Light Rapid Transit system. That had given way to SkyTrain technology by the time construction finally began, but the Evergreen Line name was maintained even though the service would absorb some of the existing Millennium Line route opened in 2002.

But a year before the opening, it was revealed that the Evergreen identity would be subordinated to the existing name, with the new addition to be known merely as the Evergreen Extension of the Millennium Line (see “Evergreen name downplayed as new route map emerges,” Autumn 2015 issue, pp. 41-42).

That had already been foreshadowed in discussions in 2014 between TransLink and local political officials, who were annoyed that the Evergreen identity might be eclipsed. The municipal leaders noted that the name had been already been used in various related community endeavours, such as an arts centre and theatre right next to the future Lafarge Lake-Douglas terminus in Coquitlam.

A TransLink planner assured the locals that: “We’ll keep the Evergreen name in some way.” That turned out to be depicting the extension on system maps with a green border along the top and bottom of the solid yellow line traditionally used for the Millennium Line (see photos, p. 11, Autumn 2016 issue).

Now, even that concession has been swept aside. Maps now simply show the whole route from Lafarge Lake-Douglas to VCC-Clark in Vancouver as the Millennium Line, all in yellow, and any reference to the Evergreen Extension has vanished.

The change seems have taken effect in January, as the current SkyTrain route maps mounted above the interior doorways have the notation

01/20 in one corner. (Editor)

Major escalator upgrades at Granville

Station have been completed, with all access points to the station re-opening on July 17.

The multi-year project saw the station's six escalators replaced at a cost of \$14.5 million. Three of those are the longest in Metro Vancouver, each of them more than 35 metres (115 ft.) long.

The station is the deepest on the SkyTrain system, being some 25 metres underground. Granville is the first of 13 stations to receive new escalators.

Altogether, TransLink will replace 37 escalators that are over 30 years old along the Expo Line and at Waterfront Station on West Coast Express. Projects are already under way at Commercial-Broadway, Columbia, Waterfront, and Nanaimo stations. (TransLink)

Port News

Neptune Terminal resumed operations in September after shutting down in May for extensive capacity improvements that will not be completed until next year.

A 231-tonne stacker-reclaimer, built by United Engineering at Point Hope Shipyard in Victoria's Inner Harbour, was shipped to Neptune on the weekend of August 15-16 aboard the barge *Dynamic Beast*. It had taken 18 months to build.

Standing 30 metres high, with a 47-metre boom, the machine had been installed and commissioned by October 1.

Coal deliveries by train resumed in September, with Neptune using a renovated single-car dumper for unloading. A new double-dumper is under construction, but will not be finished until 2021.

A new ship-loader built in Vietnam was delivered just before Thanksgiving, welded to the deck of a ship. It will become operational next year.

Other work has included dredging to accommodate Capesize vessels.

When all of Neptune's new coal infrastructure is operational, the terminal will have an annual capacity of 18.2 million tonnes.

Neptune has installed a system to spray empty gondola cars with a dust-suppressant solution as they are departing. The solution coagulates at the bottom of the car and is dumped out with the next load of coal. (*North Shore News/Victoria Times-Colonist*/Corwin Doeksen)

Coal shipments via Roberts Bank from Teck Resources' southeastern B.C. mines will continue for at least another five years, albeit at much reduced volumes than before.

Teck has signed an agreement with Westshore Terminals to ship five to seven million tonnes of metallurgical coal for each of the next five years, starting from the expiry of the current long-term contract on March 31 next year, under which Teck was shipping 19 million tonnes per year.

The new deal will continue until Teck has shipped the contracted amount of 32.25 million tonnes.

This is a reversal of Teck's previous intention to ship all of its metallurgical coal via Neptune Terminals in North Vancouver and Ridley Terminals in Prince Rupert after the current contract with Westshore expires (see Winter 2019/20 issue, pp. 6-13). (Teck)

The Ray-Mont transload facility featured in the previous issue (pp. 22-33) has received a \$17.5 million grant from the federal government for a project that will expand its capacity by 160%.

The Richmond facility specializes in containerization of grain for ocean export. The grant will enable an additional 64,000 TEU (20-ft.-equivalent) containers to be processed each year, or about 1.7 million tonnes.

Also receiving a grant is the Fibreco terminal in North Vancouver, adjacent to CN's McLean Yard near the foot of Pemberton Avenue, which handles agri-food products and wood pellets. Fibreco is getting \$7.5 million to double its on-site rail capacity so it can process up to 200 extra trains annually. (*Inside Logistics*)

Preservation

Two-car interurban trains have been operated by the Fraser Valley Heritage Railway in volunteers' "work sessions".

This has seen ex-BCER 1304 and 1225 operating in tandem, with power supplied by the usual four-wheel generator trailer. Only the leading car has its traction motors working, but the brakes on both cars are in operation.

Such two-car trains are planned for use next year, to accommodate more passengers while

allowing for adequate social distancing, with maximum occupancy of 50%. (Bob Webster)

Eight cars and a tender in the collection of the Cranbrook History Centre are to be deaccessioned, the organization announced in August.

The vehicles are considered historically significant but beyond the resources of the Centre to maintain or restore. Their condition ranges from fair to poor.

The Centre is accepting expressions of interest until December 31 from museums, railway preservation societies, and other public institutions, and will consider offers from private collectors if suitable public organizations cannot be found.

The vehicles on offer include four semi-streamlined cars for the *Chinook* service, consisting of baggage car CP 3612 (built 1940), baggage-buffet combine car CP 3051 (built 1936), coach CP 2104 (built 1936) and coach CP 1700 (built 1938).

Another four cars are steel heavyweights: baggage car CP 4481 (built 1921), sleeper *Redvers* (built 1929), sleeper *Newcastle* (built 1921), and dining car *Wingfield* (built 1921).

The final vehicle is the tender from CP 4-8-4 locomotive No. 3100.

Inquiries should be directed to Bob Whetham, Board Chair, at board@cranbrookhistorycentre.com



THE SANDHOUSE



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All contributions are gratefully received, but are subject to editing. Please send all news items, photos and articles to the Editor, care of the Division address (see page 2).

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