

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland P.C., M.P.,
Minister of Transport,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, On
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your re-election and return to Cabinet. We wish you success in your government's endeavours. Transport is an important portfolio that touches on Canadians every day.

Transport Action British Columbia is a passenger transportation organization advocating for improved public transportation options that benefit British Columbians. We are affiliated with Transport Action Canada.

One of our concerns is cross-border transportation and Canadian investments in infrastructure needed to support improved passenger rail connections across the U.S. border. Some of these issues have been raised with your Ministerial predecessors

The Washington State legislature recently passed amendments setting a target of 5 daily Amtrak trains between Vancouver and Seattle by 2035 ([1837-S.PL.pdf](#)). Canadian investment in infrastructure improvements is necessary to support this initiative. Some of these improvements are also related to supporting transportation needs for the FIFA World Cup in 2026.

1. Amtrak has requested a second, improved platform within the secure area to support FIFA World Cup service. This request needs expediting. An improved platform will improve crowd control and accessibility for Amtrak's new train sets.
2. Transport Action Canada's detailed report "[Beyond HFR](#)" ([Section 8.3](#)) details several improvements in southwestern B.C. that will improve passenger and freight rail fluidity, providing safety and economic benefits to both and wider economic benefits to the region (e.g. tourism).
 - Second track through the Grandview Cut to untangle passenger and CN freight movements:
 - Reduce conflicts between and delays to CN freight trains serving the port and Via/Amtrak passenger trains serving Pacific Central Station.
 - Improve train crew safety by eliminating hand-thrown switches.
 - Reduce grade crossing blockages further east on the rail line.
 - Rail over rail crossover at Colebrook Road junction with the freight line to Roberts Bank:
 - This level crossing of two busy freight railways is prone to congestion, causing delays to Amtrak's passenger service. A 'flyover' grade separation would eliminate conflicts and delays to freight and passenger train operations. If no action is taken, rail congestion and delays will only get worse with the expansion of Deltaport facilities.
 - Delay reductions at this location would improve service using the aging New Westminster rail bridge.
 - New siding at Crescent Beach and grade separated crossing to provide reliable access to the community. Long trains have blocked access to Crescent Beach, a dangerous scenario if first responders need immediate access to the community.

- Protected beach access crossings for Semiahmoo First Nation. Currently there are no proper crossings allowing the Semiahmoo First Nation access across the railway track to the foreshore. This is a safety, equity and reconciliation issue.
- 3. Climate hardening the BNSF tracks to protect against landslides, storm damage, sea level rise, pedestrian intrusions, etc. The scope of this project would depend on plans for the White Rock rail bypass (Bullet 5).
- 4. Replacing the New Westminster Rail Bridge (NWRB) crossing is being studied. Transport Canada's planning for the replacement should assume that Amtrak will be operating 5 daily trains / day (10 NWRB crossings / day) by 2035. Plans should "protect for the future", allowing additional Via Rail and commuter rail services and higher passenger rail speeds. The November 2023 HDR report commissioned by the Canada Infrastructure Bank is based on 25 MPH speeds, insufficient for passenger rail to be highway competitive.
- 5. The Canadian and B.C. governments need to consider if the increased level of Amtrak service justifies a South Surrey / Colebrook Road passenger station, with preclearance facilities, to reduce passenger volumes at Pacific Central Station and serve the fast-growing suburbs.
- 6. Longer term, governments need to "protect for the future" the White Rock rail bypass, moving passenger rail service to Vancouver's Waterfront Station and, potentially, the Cascadia High Speed Rail project.
- 7. Canadian governments must ensure that the Washington State government commits to continue funding Amtrak's Vancouver service to protect Canadian investments made to improve Amtrak's passenger service.

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

CC: The Honourable Mike Farnworth, B.C. Minister of Transportation and Transit
CC: Taleeb Noormohamed, M.P. Vancouver-Granville
CC: Terry Johnson, President, Transport Action Canada

Yours sincerely,

Frederick Jelfs,
Secretary – Transport Action British Columbia