

**VIA RAIL'S 2022 ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
AUGUST 9, 2022**

This document contains answers to the most frequently asked questions received as part of VIA Rail Canada's 2022 Annual Public Meeting.

We would like to thank the public for their participation and interest in VIA Rail.

Please note that questions of the same nature have been grouped together and that the grammar and syntax of the questions received have been corrected.

The 2022 Annual Public Meeting video is available to watch, in English and in French, on VIA Rail's YouTube channel and Facebook Page.

We also invite you to consult VIA Rail's 2021 annual report, available in our [Media Centre](#).

SERVICES

a. Service resumption

- Q1. Will morning service ever return between Toronto and London, Ontario?
Why have trains #85 and 88 not been restored as others have?
Can you please bring back early morning service from Kingston/Belleville to Toronto?
Why did Kingston-Toronto #651 not return on June 9, when most other Corridor trains resumed?**

In June, VIA Rail resumed almost all its services throughout the country with the exception of 12 frequencies which include trains 82-83-85-88-650-651.

VIA Rail is assessing its services on an ongoing basis and as Canada recovers from the pandemic, the Corporation has taken this opportunity to evaluate in a more in-depth manner the above-mentioned frequencies based on various factors. These include the new work from home reality, workforce availability, operational considerations, continuing to manage the financial impacts of the pandemic and ensuring VIA Rail serves as many Canadians as possible within the reality it operates in.

VIA Rail will be providing a decision in the fall on whether or not the above-mentioned frequencies will resume, and we thank our passengers for their understanding.

b. Long-distance routes

- Q2. With Nova Scotia and New Brunswick having a combined total of 1.7 million people, what is VIA Rail Canada's plan for Atlantic Canada?
Will there be an increase in service?**

As part of its service resumption plan, VIA Rail was pleased to restore in June the third frequency of the *Ocean*.

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We understand that Atlantic Canada would like to see more frequent trains in the region. Our goal has always been to provide, within our available resources, a service that can respond as much as possible to the needs of our passengers.

Although we do not foresee at this time to add frequencies, we review on an ongoing basis the performance of our existing services.

Q3. Is there a plan to bring back more services to Atlantic Canada, such as a daily regional route for Halifax to Moncton?

Are there still plans to create a local service between Campbellton and Moncton?

As part of its service resumption plan, VIA Rail was pleased to restore in June the third frequency of the *Ocean*.

We understand that Atlantic Canada would like to see more frequent trains in the region. Our goal has always been to provide, within our available resources, a service that can respond as much as possible to the needs of our passengers.

As mentioned in our 2020-2024 Corporate plan, after numerous discussions and evaluations with the infrastructure owners as well as local governments, any further feasibility investigation regarding Eastern intercity service has been suspended due to the significant investments required by the infrastructure owners.

One of the key service delivery constraints faced is that due to infrastructure limitations and slow track speeds, trip times would be approximate double that of the automobile. The availability of equipment to assign to this service would also have to be reviewed.

Q4. When will VIA Rail reinstate the dome car on the *Ocean*?

Is there any possibility of adding a mid train Skyline car to the *Ocean* to make up for no park car?

Due to various factors including operational and equipment considerations, VIA Rail will continue to operate the *Ocean* route without a dome car until further notice.

Q5. Train speed between Campbellton and Moncton is very slow compared to what it once was. Not long ago, VIA Rail was in discussions with the infrastructure owner to make improvements. Has there been any more talks or plans to improve this section of track?

Will there be work done on the rails between Bathurst to Halifax to ensure safety and faster travel in the future?

Will VIA Rail conclude an agreement with the Canadian National for the modernization of the Newcastle subdivision for a more rapid service?

It is important to note that VIA Rail does not own the infrastructure on which it operates the *Ocean*. We continue to work with the infrastructure owner, CN, in order to improve trip times for this service and, at this time, we do not plan to perform infrastructure upgrades on that route to increase speed.

Q6. Any plan on expanding Western Canadian services? Perhaps with a line linking Calgary to Edmonton, or Winnipeg-Regina-Calgary?

What are VIA Rail's plans for returning rail service to Calgary?

We recognize that travel options are more limited in some regions of the country and understand the negative impact this situation has on the communities in Western Canada. While we are always interested in exploring new routes, we unfortunately do not have the resources at this time (i.e., equipment, infrastructure, tracks, stations) required to expand our services.

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VIA Rail remains committed to serving communities in Western Canada and as part of the Corporation's long-term vision, we continue to work with communities and governments to evaluate service expansion.

c. On time performance

Q7. Your trains are consistently and chronically late. What are you doing to address, improve, and correct these long-standing issues?

VIA Rail is committed to providing an enjoyable, safe, efficient and accessible service, but it is aware of the impact delays have on the travel experience of its passengers.

VIA Rail owns only 3% of the rail infrastructure on which it operates, and the rest belongs to freight train companies. As such, VIA Rail's on-time performance is mainly attributable to the fact that the Corporation has limited control over the infrastructure and as a result does not have priority over freight trains.

VIA Rail is limited in the measures that can be taken to remedy this reality, but it has nonetheless over the years taken actions to address its on-time performance. For example, it has made incremental changes to its schedules with the aim of improving its on-time performance and it proposed the High Frequency Rail project between Quebec City and Toronto, which is a large-scale endeavour that consists of upgrading and building tracks that will be dedicated to the transportation of passengers.

In addition, VIA Rail has been working at modernizing the terms and conditions around its access rights when negotiating Train Service Agreements. Our approach is to try to apply best practices to an agreement based on capacity and punctuality performance management which VIA Rail believes can improve performance for host railways and above all, our passengers.

d. Service resumption in Gaspésie

Q8. When will Montréal-Gaspé service return?

The tracks in the Gaspésie region belong to the Government of Quebec, and the infrastructure is currently undergoing a rehabilitation program in order to eventually permit a return to passenger service. As such, VIA Rail intends to resume service to the Gaspésie region once the tracks are deemed safe for the operation of passenger trains and that infrastructure enables the service all the way to Gaspé with competitive trip times.

Q9. Since the railway will soon be open to New Carlisle, will VIA Rail restart partial service to Gaspésie with a RÉGÎM connection to Gaspé?

Do you intend to resume the route (distinct from the *Ocean* service) between Montréal and New Carlisle by fall 2023?

The tracks in the Gaspésie region belong to the Government of Quebec, and the infrastructure is currently undergoing a rehabilitation program in order to eventually permit a return to passenger service. As such, VIA Rail intends to resume service to the Gaspésie region once the tracks are deemed safe for the operation of passenger trains and that infrastructure enables the service all the way to Gaspé with competitive trip times. As such, VIA Rail will not offer partial service between Montréal and New Carlisle.



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- e. Service between Montréal and New York City

Q10. What is the status of the Adirondack train from New York City to Montréal and when will the train line resume service?

The Adirondack train is a service provided by Amtrak between New York and Montréal. We invite you to contact Amtrak for more information on the resumption date of this route.

PASSES, DISCOUNTS AND ONBOARD SERVICES

- a. Passes

Q1. Your website says that the Commuter Pass, Canada Pass, etc. are only valid until June 30. Will new passes be introduced to replace them? If so, when will they be available? What is the plan for commuter passes?

Will student passes be made available again in the future?

Will passes be purchasable again in the near future?

In an effort to continue improving the customer journey, VIA Rail will be launching new rail passes progressively starting in fall 2022. This will allow us to better meet the needs of passengers across the country and, combined to the launch of the new reservation system, to offer a larger variety of rail passes.

- b. Baggage cars and bicycles in the Corridor

Q2. When will VIA Rail allow passengers to bring their bikes onto trains in the Corridor? I understand that the baggage cars (that used to handle bicycles) were removed and have not been replaced. I also understand that the new trains sets will be able to handle cyclist needs, but they will be slowly phased in. In the interim, what is VIA Rail's plan to accommodate bicycles on the Quebec City - Windsor corridor?

Committed to providing the best possible experience when transporting bicycles in the Corridor, VIA Rail will reintroduce this feature once there are enough new trains to guarantee this service on round trips. We thank you for your understanding and we will share more information in due course.

As always, bike transport remains available in baggage cars on our long-distance and our regional routes.

- c. Pricing and promos

Q3. I'm wondering if VIA Rail has any concrete plans to make its services more affordable to Canadians in the coming years. If so, what are they?

As the national passenger rail service, VIA Rail is committed to offering a service that provides affordable travel options to Canadians.

Planning a trip in advance will give access to the lowest available fares. In addition, customers can save with a variety of year-round promotions offered by VIA Rail. Indeed, we are pleased to have resumed earlier this year some offers that had been temporarily suspended during the pandemic such as Discount Tuesday and other punctual sales and promotions. For example, children aged 2 to 11 travel for \$20* in Economy class in the

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Quebec City-Windsor corridor on select days* during the summer, and on the *Canadian*, the *Ocean* and regional trains any day of the week. (*Conditions apply, please visit our [website](#)).

For the latest information on deals and discounts, please visit our [website](#).

**Q4. Will VIA Rail ever bring back two-for-one senior pricing?
Is there a possibility that seniors could travel at half price at any time?**

As the national passenger rail service, VIA Rail is committed to offering a service that provides affordable travel options to Canadians.

Planning a trip in advance will give access to the lowest available fares. In addition, customers can save with a variety of year-round promotions offered by VIA Rail. Indeed, we are pleased to have resumed earlier this year some offers that had been temporarily suspended during the pandemic such as Discount Tuesday and punctual sales and promotions.

For the latest information on deals and discounts, please visit our [website](#).

MODERNIZATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Q1. What is the timeline on HFR?

Given that trains are more energy efficient and less polluting than cars and trucks and planes, when might we expect High Frequency Rail service to be fully available in the Windsor to Quebec City corridor?

Last March, the Government of Canada [launched the Request for expression of interest \(RFEOI\) for the High Frequency Rail project](#) between Quebec City and Toronto, the largest transportation infrastructure project seen by Canadians in decades.

For more information, we invite you to consult the RFEOI [here](#).

Q2. When will the new trains be in service and how many will be in service?

When will the Corridor be completely converted to those new trains?

The new Quebec City-Windsor corridor fleet is a building block of VIA Rail's modernization program and will offer an unparalleled, barrier-free and fully accessible travel experience gradually starting in Q4 2022 with the commissioning of the first train.

As a matter of fact, during the first few months, our passengers will not know they have booked their tickets on the new train but will get a pleasant surprise as they are boarding to find they are amongst the first to experience our new Corridor fleet!

The 31 remaining trains will be deployed progressively until 2025.

Q3. In the Q&A from last year's Annual Public Meeting, you quoted Cabinet Minister Jean-Yves Duclos: "VIA Rail ... will need to do some work over the next weeks and months to come back to the Canadian government and then to all of us to provide more details on what they are going to do exactly with this substantial initial amount of money [\$491 million over six years, announced in the 2021 budget] and their plan for the future." Are you now ready to come back to all of us with more details on what you are going to do exactly with that money?

Driven by the idea that it's time to reimagine the way Canadians travel, VIA Rail has been transforming passenger rail service for several years now through its modernization program and its accessibility and sustainability plans. Our modernization program includes, amongst others, the new Corridor fleet and the new reservation system.

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In addition, the 2021 Federal Budget proposed to provide VIA Rail with \$491.2 million over six years for infrastructure investments that will help reduce bottlenecks and improve fluidity and connectivity. As part of this funding, we have since then been evaluating various projects and we will have more news soon.

Q4. The equipment on the long-haul and regional trains is nearing the end of its useful service life. What is VIA Rail's plan for replacing this equipment?

When can we expect an order to be placed for a new non-Corridor equipment?

Will new equipment include the same car types as the current long-haul fleet?

Long-distance and regional services are closely linked to our mandate, our mission, our vision and the fleet that runs on these routes will need to be replaced since it is no longer reasonable to extend its operational life.

For these reasons, we have submitted a business case to the federal government, and we look forward to working with the appropriate stakeholders in the Government of Canada during the evaluation of this business case.

The replacement of this fleet will allow VIA Rail to provide a more comfortable, reliable, accessible and sustainable travel experience all the while continuing to contribute to the tourism industry and regional economic development.

We look forward to sharing more details on this process in due course.

Q5. When will VIA Rail update their booking system on the app to allow for more efficient booking and seat selection?

Can VIA Rail please amend its booking system to allow us to select our individual seats, like with plane ticket bookings, rather than random assignment?

VIA Rail is reimagining the way Canadians travel from reservation to destination with its accessibility and sustainability plans and its modernization program which includes, amongst others, a new Quebec City-Windsor corridor fleet and a new reservation system.

As such, we are progressing on the development of this new reservation system which will be launched next year and which will offer more seamless, convenient, autonomous, and personalized experience before, during and after a trip.

This new system was thought with, amongst others, passengers in mind and will offer an intuitive reservation flow and various features including seat selection.

Q6. When will VIA Rail improve Wi-Fi on trains?

Will there be any expansion of Wi-Fi in your long-distance trains?

VIA Rail is committed to providing a safe, enjoyable, comfortable and accessible travel experience to its passengers.

Since 2018, we have been improving Wi-Fi availability on trains that operate on the *Ocean*. Furthermore, between 2018 and 2021, we have upgraded and optimized the Wi-Fi service on all Wi-Fi equipped cars in the Corridor and on the *Ocean* to better support the increasing number of connected devices on our trains and to improve the customer experience of the onboard Wi-Fi service.

It is important to note that the *Ocean* travels through various areas that do not have cellular reception which leads to an intermittent Wi-Fi service. Finally, Wi-Fi is currently not offered on the *Canadian* due to various factors, including amongst others, logistical and equipment considerations.

In addition, VIA Rail is reimagining the way passengers travel from destination to reservation. Indeed, as part of its modernization program, the Corporation will be introducing a new fleet in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor which will offer our passengers, amongst other things, a high-speed reliable data connection.

Q7. I would like to know if VIA Rail is working on electric cars to allow for the electrification of the network in order to reduce the dependency on diesel cars that cause atmospheric pollution?

It is important to note that the Corporation only owns 3% of the tracks on which it operates, the rest belonging to freight train companies. This means that it does not have the decision-making power to electrify the network on which it currently operates.

Nonetheless, VIA Rail is steadfast on building the VIA Rail of tomorrow and is committed to being part of the solution to help create a more sustainable future. As such, as part of its modernization program, VIA Rail will be introducing a new fleet in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. It will be one of the most environmentally friendly fleets in North America and will be able to convert to dual mode (diesel/electric) operation.

In addition, VIA Rail reached earlier this year key milestones in its sustainability journey with the unveiling of its sustainability plan and its participation in the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, the United Nations Global Compact.

For more information on this five-year plan which will allow VIA Rail to reduce its environmental footprint, enhance its role as a responsible transportation provider and create lasting value for present and future generations, we invite you to consult our [website](#).

Q8. What are VIA Rail's plans for expanding rail services across the country in order to fight climate change?

Travel by train is considered a better option in reducing one's carbon footprint (as opposed to flying). What steps are being taken to encourage this mode of travel in our large country?

Trains played a fundamental role in building Canada and passenger rail can help address some of the greatest challenges of our time, like the climate crisis, and an unprecedented demand for sustainable and accessible mobility.

As such, VIA Rail has over the years been progressing on its modernization program and its sustainability and accessibility plans because it's time to transform passenger rail service. From its new Quebec City-Windsor corridor fleet to its new reservation system and its various actions as part of its multi-year accessibility and sustainability plans, VIA Rail is reimagining the way Canadians travel, which we believe will contribute to a modal shift.

We invite you to consult our website for more information on our [modernization program](#) and our [accessibility](#) and [sustainability](#) plans.

Q9. When will accessible sleeping car accommodations be provided on the Churchill train, equivalent to the Renaissance accessible cabin on the Ocean or the Park car accessible cabin on the Canadian?

When the renaissance cars are withdrawn, how will you provide accessible economy and sleeper accommodations for passengers with disabilities?

VIA Rail is determined to be Canada's most accessible national and intercity mode of transportation.

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On its long-distance routes, the Corporation currently offers an accessible room on the *Ocean* and on the *Canadian* and a mobility aid space on board the *Ocean*.

In addition, it has over the years implemented various initiatives across the country aimed at making the travel experience more accessible from reservation to destination. These include amongst others:

- Curbside assistance from the station entrance to the platform and relief areas for service animals in select stations;
- Menus and safety cards are available on board in braille or large print on demand;
- The creation of American Sign Language (ASL) and *Langue des Signes Québécoise* (LSQ) videos on VIA Rail's website.

For more information on accessibility initiatives and projects, we invite you to consult our [multi-year accessibility plan](#).

In addition, long-distance and regional services are closely linked to our mandate, our mission, our vision and the fleet that runs on these routes will need to be replaced since it is no longer reasonable to extend its operational life. For these reasons, we have submitted a business case to the federal government, and we look forward to working with the appropriate stakeholders in the Government of Canada during the evaluation of this business case. The replacement of this fleet will allow VIA Rail to provide a more comfortable, reliable, accessible and sustainable travel experience.