
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

Province provides \$7.5 million for E&N passenger rail

NANAIMO – The Province is responding to ongoing community support of the E&N Railway by investing \$7.5 million to help restore passenger train service on Vancouver Island, announced Premier Christy Clark today.

“Vancouver Island mayors have told us loud and clear that this rail service supports their economies by creating jobs, which in turn supports many families along the route,” said Premier Clark. “Today the Province is stepping up with \$7.5 million to help return this train service to island families and communities.”

Provincial funding will be provided in two parts. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure will contribute up to \$500,000 for an engineering inspection on the condition of the approximately 40 rail bridges and trestles on the line.

The balance of \$7 million will help the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) repair the track and ensure that it is safe for passengers. The ICF has identified that it needs \$15 million to complete essential repairs. The provincial funding of \$7 million is conditional upon the final bridge inspection and ICF matching the other \$7.5 million that it needs to ensure all repairs are completed and passenger train service can safely resume.

“Our government has heard from the communities and the local MLAs about the importance of the E&N to families on Vancouver Island,” said Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Blair Lekstrom. “We’re taking a balanced approach to ensure the service is viable over the long-term.”

“Helping the E&N return to operation means a great deal to me as a MLA and as a resident of Vancouver Island,” said Community, Sport and Cultural Development Minister Ida Chong. “Many people have dedicated much time and energy to the E&N and it is a distinct island service worth supporting.”

“Not only is the E&N an important part of the heritage of the Island, but its role in transporting agricultural products and other freight is vital to many people and businesses,” said Comox Valley MLA Don McRae.

The ICF will also prepare a long-term plan that describes how passenger service can reach its potential. The plan will include ways to attract more ridership, which is an important factor to the economic success of the railway.

"This rail service has the potential to be an important transportation link for commuters, and is a big part of the tourism sector on the Island as well," said Parksville-Qualicum MLA Ron Cantelon.

The rail operator, Southern Railway on Vancouver Island (SRVI), suspended passenger train service earlier this spring when it determined the line was no longer safe and funding was not available to make repairs. Inspections identified decaying wooden rail ties, worn or loose bolts and vegetation overgrowth.

Today freight service continues with speed restrictions on the E&N railway.

Quick Facts:

The E&N rail line has been in operation on Vancouver Island for 125 years.

- It runs 225 km, between Victoria and Courtenay.
- Before passenger service was suspended earlier this spring, service consisted of one self-powered passenger car running daily between Victoria and Courtenay and a freight service.
- Freight service on the line continues to operate.
- The railway is owned by the ICF and operated under contract by the SRVI. VIA Rail owns the passenger car equipment and provides ticketing services.
- The ICF is a partnership of First Nations, five regional districts and 14 municipalities.
- The governments of Canada and British Columbia assisted in the creation of the ICF by allowing CP Rail to donate the corridor to the ICF as a charitable donation.
- In 2008, the Province forgave \$4.5 million of taxes owed by the ICF when it acquired the railway corridor and contributed \$500,000 to a study of the future viability of the E&N rail service, which was release in July 2010.

Learn More:

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure E&N study evaluating the economic potential and identifying future opportunities for the rail service:

www.th.gov.bc.ca//publications/reports_and_studies/Evaluation_ENRailway

The ICF owns the rail corridor and works to expand and enhance freight and dayliner passenger service: www.islandrail.ca

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