



August 14, 2013

Via email: Marc\_Laliberte@viarail.ca

Mr. Marc Laliberté  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
VIA Rail  
3 Place Ville Marie, Suite 500  
Montreal, PQ H3B 2C9

Dear Mr. Laliberté:

**RE: SOUTHERN RAILWAY OF BC PROPOSAL**

The Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities (AVICC) represents the interests of its 51 member municipalities, regional districts and other local governments of Vancouver Island, Sunshine Coast, Powell River and Central Coast. Reintroducing passenger service is very important to our island members in terms of the overall economy and wellbeing of communities on Vancouver Island. The Island Corridor Foundation and our members have worked hard to get all the pieces in place to enable passenger rail service to be reinstated and we are seeking your support in finding a viable service alternative that meets the needs of all parties.

We understand that Southern Railway of BC submitted a proposal in the spring for the reintroduction of passenger service. Passenger service is a critical component to the viability of island rail as an overall service to communities. AVICC members strongly support the proposal that has been put forward offering an early morning train originating out of Nanaimo approximately 6:00am heading southbound arriving at Victoria around 8am. The train would then depart Victoria arriving at Courtenay approximately 12:30pm and then make an afternoon run back to Victoria for a 5:30pm arrival. It would depart Victoria at 6pm for an 8pm Nanaimo arrival. This service would provide a valuable alternative to commuters, tourists and the general public to transit between these communities.

Local government members and their communities acknowledge that adequate funding and a sound business plan are key to being able to offer services that are efficient, valuable and sustainable. Effective communication between the parties and

the desire to work collaboratively is imperative to being able to achieve what we hope is a common goal of offering an effective and sustainable passenger rail service to communities on Vancouver Island.

At this time, we ask for your commitment to review the Southern Railway proposal with a view that it has the potential of being a viable service for Via Rail and reopen the dialogue with Southern Railways and the Island Corridor to clarify questions, discuss concerns and work together to problem solve in order to reach a passenger service agreement that incorporates a strong business plan. If at the end of the day the business case is sound but is not within the budget that has been allocated to Via Rail for island passenger service, then we need to know so that we can have further discussions with our partners.

There has been much discussion of late about deadlines, but the reality is that all parties are challenged with holding on to funding that has been set aside for island rail service and, as time passes, the infrastructure itself continues to decline. In particular, the regional funding is tied to the 2013 and 2014 years and may not be able to be carried over because of a lack of decision-making. The winter season is also cost effective timing to have the rail infrastructure work completed. It would be expedient to conclude discussions to allow for this work to be done in the winter of 2013. Therefore, time is of the essence and we are asking that you respond accordingly.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and look forward to hearing that frank discussions are in process.

Sincerely,



Mayor Larry Cross  
President

Cc The Honourable Lisa Raitt, Minister, Transport Canada  
The Honourable Todd Stone, Minister, Transportation and Infrastructure  
MP John Duncan, Vancouver Island North  
MP Jean Crowder, Nanaimo Cowichan  
MP Randall Garrison, Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca

MP James Lunney, Nanaimo-Alberni  
MP Elizabeth May, Saanich-Gulf Islands  
MP Murray Rankin, Victoria  
MLA Scott Fraser, Alberni-Pacific Rim  
MLA Don MacRae, Comox Valley  
MLA Bill Routley, Cowichan Valley  
MLA Maurine Karigianis, Esquimalt-Royal Roads  
MLA John Horgan, Juan de Fuca  
MLA Leonard Krog, Nanaimo  
MLA Doug Routley, Nanaimo-North Cowichan  
MLA Claire Trevena, North Island  
MLA Dr. Andrew Weaver, Oak Bay-Gordon Head  
MLA Michelle Stilwell, Parksville-Qualicum  
MLA Gary Holman, Saanich North and the Islands  
MLA Lana Popham, Saanich South  
MLA Carole James, Victoria-Beacon Hill  
MLA Rob Fleming, Victoria-Swan Lake  
Mary Ashley, Chair, Island Corridor Foundation  
Frank J. Butzelaar, President, Southern Railway of British Columbia