



June 20, 2025

The Honourable Mike Farnworth, MLA
Minister of Transportation and Transit
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Sent via email: TT.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Farnworth,

The Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) is the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) area association representing the interests of local governments and member First Nations in the British Columbia region of Vancouver Island, qathet, the Sunshine Coast, Central Coast and North Coast.

After consideration at the AVICC Annual Convention in April 2025, AVICC members endorsed a resolution, sponsored by the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, that is of interest to your Ministry. The resolution and background information are enclosed for your review and attention. Since this resolution is regional in nature, it will not be forwarded to UBCM for consideration at the UBCM Convention in September:

AVICC Regional Resolution R2 – *Island Rail Corridor*

The Island Rail Corridor (formerly the E&N Corridor) is located on Vancouver Island, B.C., with the majority being acquired and managed by the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) and operated under contract by the Southern Railway of Vancouver Island (SVI). The corridor is approximately 289 km running from Victoria to Courtenay with connections between Port Alberni and Parksville and to Nanaimo waterfront. The Island Rail Corridor is a significant part of Vancouver Island's transportation history and future potential.

The resolution requests that the Province prioritize the minimum required upgrades to the West to East section of the Island Rail Corridor to allow for its use in the event of a wildfire or highway closure. In June 2023, Highway 4 was closed due to the Cameron Lake

P.O. Box 28058, Victoria, BC V9B 6K8
Email: info@avicc.ca • Tel: 236-237-1202 • www.avicc.ca

Representing Local Government on Vancouver Island, qathet, Sunshine, North and Central Coasts

Bluff wildfire causing significant economic, health and safety impacts to the residents and visitors to the West Coast communities of Vancouver Island.

AVICC requests that the Province prioritize funding the minimum required upgrades to the West to East section of the Island Rail Corridor to allow for its use in the event of a wildfire or highway closure. We respectfully request your comments on this matter.

If you have any questions, or require further information, please contact Theresa Dennison, AVICC Executive Director, at 236-237-1202 or at tdennison@avicc.ca.

Sincerely,



President Ben Geselbracht, AVICC
Councillor, City of Nanaimo

cc: Hon. Brenda Bailey, Minister of Finance
Hon. Brittny Anderson, Minister of State for Local Governments and Rural Communities
Chair John Jack, Alberni Clayoquot RD; Chief Councillor, Huu-ay-aht First Nations
Daniel Sailland, Chief Administrative Officer, Alberni Clayoquot FN

Island Rail Corridor

WHEREAS wildfires and other emergencies have, and may again, present an ongoing threat to communities on Vancouver Island, including the closure of Highway 4.

WHEREAS the Island Corridor includes a West to East section of rail that connects the City of Port Alberni to the City of Parksville and Eastern communities of Vancouver Island, providing an alternative transportation route for both the movement of people and goods in the event of a highway closure and offer a greater ability to attack wildfires in that part of the region.

AND WHEREAS a minimal investment to the West to East Rail connection would be required to facilitate the use of Hi-Rail busses, trucks, and firefighting equipment at low speeds on this section of the rail line.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities request that the province of British Columbia prioritize funding the minimum required upgrades to the West to East section of the Island Rail Corridor to allow for its use in the event of a wildfire or highway closure.

Background:

The Island Rail Corridor (formerly the E&N Corridor) is located on Vancouver Island, B.C., with the majority being acquired and managed by the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) and operated under contract by the Southern Railway of Vancouver Island (SVI). The corridor is approximately 289 km running from Victoria to Courtenay with connections between Port Alberni and Parksville and to Nanaimo waterfront.

The ICF was incorporated in 2004 and is a federally registered charity that represents the interests of several Vancouver Island communities, local governments, First Nations, businesses and other stakeholders to advance the strategic direction for the corridor. In addition to being a vital transportation system for the island, the corridor has the potential to be a regional economic, social and cultural connection across many communities. Due to the current conditions of the corridor, operations are limited to freight, with no passenger services being feasible at this time. Funding and investment continue to be a primary challenge for the corridor, limiting the necessary resources available for maintenance and required upgrades.

The Island Rail Corridor is a significant part of Vancouver Island's transportation history and future potential. Through continued collaborative efforts amongst governments, First Nations partners, communities and industry stakeholders the corridor could provide increased economic, environmental, and emergency preparedness potential. Understanding that there are many historic and current impacts of the rail corridor on First Nations communities that need to be reconciled, the above noted AVICC resolution speaks to a segment of the corridor that does not have the same level of outstanding impacts and, thus, could be subject to immediate investment for emergency purposes.

Reports:

The [Island Rail Corridor Condition Assessment](#) was completed in 2020 by WSP Canada Group Limited. on behalf of the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. This assessment provides a detailed evaluation of the base asset condition of the rail corridor in its entirety. The assessment examines infrastructure, grade crossings, bridges and rockfall activity and provides cost estimates for repairs and upgrades. Upgrades estimates include passenger use at higher speeds thus resulting in a higher level of required investment. This assessment builds upon previous work completed through the 2009 [Evaluation of the E&N Rail Corridor: Baseline Report \(HMM Report\)](#) by Hatch Mott MacDonald.

At the 2019 Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) Convention a resolution was endorsed to '[Revitalize Island Rail](#)'. This resolution called upon the Province of British Columbia to take immediate actions to provide sufficient funding to restore the railway infrastructure. Another [Island Rail Corridor](#) resolution was endorsed at the 2022 UBCM Convention to call on the provincial and federal governments to commit to making the necessary investments to preserve the Island Corridor. Following the endorsement of these resolutions funding was committed from the province for First Nations and regional districts to plan for the future of the corridor but no funding has yet to be committed to provide the required upgrades.