

**Meeting Date:** June 17, 2019  
**Department:** Engineering & Public Works  
**Prepared By:** George Elliott, P.Eng., Director of Engineering & Public Works  
**Reviewed By:** Greg McClinchey, Chief Administrative Officer  
**Subject:** National Transportation Policy Update  
Report No. EPW 19-014

---

## RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended:

That Council receive as information, Report EPW 19-014 regarding the Town of St. Marys request for support of their resolution, passed March 26, 2019, recommending VIA Rail enhancements in accordance with the vision of the National Transportation Policy.

## BACKGROUND

At the May 6, 2019 Council meeting, the attached correspondence from the Town of St. Marys was received as information. Council requested additional information on the Town of St Marys position forwarded to Transport Canada.

In February 2019, the Federal Government received the Interim Report on Establishing a Canadian Transportation and Logistics Strategy in relation to the National Transportation Policy. The interim report and additional background information are contained in the following links:

1. <https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/future-transportation-canada.html>
2. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/TRAN/report-27/page-ToC>
3. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/TRAN/Reports/RP10318533/tranrp27/tranrp27-e.pdf>

The Town of St Marys Council resolution is requesting support from all communities served by VIA Rail in seeking the support of the Government of Canada to adequately fund and fully support VIA Rail Canada by increasing the frequency, reliability, ticket cost and speed of VIA Rail service on the north main line in 2019.

Historically, the VIA Rail service on the north main line, between Sarnia, through Strathroy-Caradoc, London, St Marys and Stratford to Toronto, has been reduced from 14 trains in 1977 to 4 trains currently.

## COMMENTS

While there has been considerable work undertaken by the federal government (including by the Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities) in the recent past on the subject of a National Transportation Policy, there is much yet to be done. It is worth noting that there have been several opportunities for substantive input into the policy development process as both Minister Garneau and the Standing Committee Chair have called for recommendations, research and feedback on the subject.

Thus far, the primary focus of efforts have focused on large-scale issues such as trade corridors to global markets, international air travel and major inter-city travel. An example of this focus is one of the next steps of “where do we go from here”, in which the plan calls for continued in-depth assessment of VIA Rail’s high frequency rail proposal for the Toronto-Quebec City corridor. As well, there is emphasis on the Niagara Peninsula international trade corridor as an example case study.

Similar to the Niagara Peninsula trade corridor, the north main line through Strathroy parallels the Highway 402 corridor. The Highway 402 corridor is also a major international trade corridor in support of global commerce. The Town of St Marys initiative to raise higher awareness of the north main line corridor has merit within the vision of the National Strategy. Increased government support of VIA Rail along the north main line would benefit this major international trade corridor and all communities along the corridor including Strathroy-Caradoc.

A key philosophy in focusing on passenger rail enhancements is the reduction of the passenger vehicles with single or low volume occupants from the Provincial Highway systems. This increases the highway capacity and speed of commercial traffic for increased efficiency and cost effectiveness of domestic and international trade.

Should Strathroy-Caradoc wish to support the Town of St Marys initiative, one or both of the following resolutions could be considered by Council:

- That the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc confirms its support for the establishment of a comprehensive and fulsome National Transportation Strategy that seeks to fund, develop, grow and manage the infrastructure, policy frameworks and fiscal mechanisms needed to ensure that Canada’s rail, road, air and shipping networks are appropriately equipped to serve the economic and social needs of Canadians for generations to come.
- That the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc urges the Government of Canada to adequately fund and support VIA Rail Canada’s efforts to increase the frequency, reliability, cost effectiveness, and speed of the VIA Rail service on the North Mail Line, as passenger service improvements have direct beneficial impacts to the Highway 402 major international trade corridor and to the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications to the Municipality. However, achieving increased Government of Canada support for VIA Rail's north main line through Strathroy-Caradoc would provide many benefits to the community and overall economic development.

## **CONSULTATION**

This report was prepared in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Town of St Marys letter of April 2, 2019 to Transport Canada