

Ottawa Central Railway Keeping Ottawa 'On Track'

OTTAWA, August 26, 2007- This weekend, the Ottawa Central Railway hosted the beloved children's character, Thomas the Tank Engine, allowing children and adults alike to ride aboard the smiling locomotive. It was just another example of how Ottawa Central Railway is remaining involved in the community.

Year after year, the railway has opened its doors to the general public to view historical and modern railcars side-by-side, as well as the operations of one of Ontario's short line railways.

Ottawa Central Railway also plays a part in the Computers for Schools program, moving refurbished computers along the line, which are then donated to schools, libraries and not-for-profit organizations across Canada.

With safety in mind, the railway has also hosted presentations on dangerous goods training for local emergency responders in order to quickly assess risks, protect the public, and mitigate any damage in the event of an incident involving dangerous goods.

But even with all these examples, the community contribution and ongoing presentations are just one element of how the railway has been involved in Ottawa since it began its operations in 1998.

Recently, the railway's general manager, James Allen, contributed to the Mayor of Ottawa's Task Force on Transportation, suggesting the use of existing infrastructure to help with public transit. In addition, the report suggested that rail freight traffic over the Ottawa River would help reduce truck volumes on downtown roads.

According to the report, the Forest Engineering Research Institute of Canada has expressed interest in the project and also confirmed the interest of high-volume shippers who see the benefits of a rail link between Ottawa and Gatineau.

Rail, for shippers, is much more cost-effective than other modes of transportation. It can also play a key role in relieving traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions in the region.

In fact, the addition of just one freight or passenger train removes the equivalent of up to 280 trucks, or 1,000 cars. In addition, one train that moves 1,000 kilometres will save 4,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions compared to moving those goods by truck.

But the importance of Ottawa Central Railway extends beyond the city limits of Ottawa. The railway owns 95 miles of mainline between Pembroke and Ottawa, operates 207 miles of railway, and carries a number of different commodities, including newsprint, salt, forest products, wire rod, and scrap metal.

It also operates a portion of its line in Quebec, where the province of Quebec, the federal government, and the short line railways recently announced a \$75 million investment partnership to restore and upgrade short line infrastructure. As part of the investment, Ottawa Central Railway will be upgrading the load capacity of its track over a distance of 36 kilometres between Pontiac and Portage-du-Fort.

For the railway, this partnership will ensure that shippers are able to move more commodities using fewer railcars. It also means an increase in efficiency, and many shippers have already acknowledged the significant cost benefits of utilizing rail.

Two of the railway's largest shippers, Smurfit Stone and Ivaco, have both spoken highly of the railway. Both companies, which together represent 75 per cent of Ottawa

Central Railway's yearly business, have stated that trucking inbound and outbound materials would increase their transportation costs by 30 to 40 per cent.

While these are significant numbers for both businesses, it is a similar story told across Ontario. Short line railways across Ontario have a proud and prominent role to play in building and growing the Ontario economy, said Cliff Mackay, president and chief executive officer of the Railway Association of Canada.

Short line railways originate more than 140,000 carloads of freight traffic each and every year, or the equivalent of 500,000 truckloads moving on area highways. These are raw materials and goods manufactured in Ontario, which are then moved and interchanged with long-haul, high-volume railways that transport to markets in the United States, Asia and Europe.

With the addition of Class 1 railways, more than 40 per cent of Ontario's goods each year are moved by rail, and those same railways employ more than 10,000 people and support tens of thousands of jobs indirectly. In addition, 80 per cent of Canada-U.S. domestic and international rail traffic passes through Ontario's borders.

"Ontario, as home to 13 short line and regional railways connecting Ontario's small and medium-sized communities to major markets throughout North America and around the world, can ensure green economic growth through supporting these railways," said Mackay. "They have a strong and vibrant role to play in the future of Ontario's economy and in ensuring sustainable, green growth."

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