



TEAMSTERS CANADA RAIL CONFERENCE DIVISION 320



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January 11, 2010

Subject: Passenger Rail Transportation in Valley.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You may recall a bulletin regarding rail transportation last year on our website. Here is an update as originally reported in The Province newspaper January 8, 2010.

In Solidarity,

Murray Douglas
TCRC Div 320
S&C Officer

Passenger rights may herald service

Source: Kent Spencer, The Province

Prospects for rail in the Fraser Valley are vastly enhanced by a Canadian Pacific contract that enshrines passengers' rights, said Rick Green, Langley Township's mayor.

There are "free" passenger rights on a 14-kilometre section of CP's line from Trinity Western University to Cloverdale, he said Wednesday.

And he said the contract clause has major implications for more than 500,000 residents in Langley and Surrey.

"There's a real, burning need for efficient transit service. It can be done sooner rather than later," Green said.

Passenger rights in major North American cities have usually been sold off to large corporations, he said. But in the Langley-Surrey corridor, the rights were enshrined when publicly owned B.C. Hydro sold the track to CP in 1988.



Last summer B.C. Hydro renewed the rights, which would have lapsed, after Green discovered the clause.

"CP was chagrined. The rights are free," Green said.

A demonstration line should begin soon, he said.

"We've got to show how people will flock to a rail corridor as opposed to a bus corridor. The details would have to be worked out with CP," he added.

It could begin with several modern, fuel-efficient diesel cars and operate several times a day from Chilliwack to Surrey along the old interurban tracks.

CP spokesman Mike LoVecchio said he "has no idea" what the agreement means for future passenger service.

"It's true that Hydro retains the right to operate a passenger service, but Mayor Green's interpretation is his own," he said.

CP rents commuter-rail space for the West Coast Express and has similar agreements in Montreal, Toronto and Chicago.

Green said Fraser Valley municipalities are acting together for the first time.

He chairs the new Fraser Valley Light Rail Task Force, which has council representatives from Abbotsford, Surrey, Delta and Langley Township.

The task force augments community groups such as the Rail for the Valley, South Fraser on Trax, the Valley Transportation Advisory Committee and the Heritage Rail Society.

John Buker, founder of Rail for the Valley, said municipal support is growing.

"Gas prices and global warming are issues that will take hold," he said. "It's important to do this right for the sake of the valley's future."

The issue is being further highlighted by the Chilliwack Museum, which has a yearlong exhibit on the old B.C. Electric Railway interurban line, which celebrates its 100th anniversary on Oct. 1.

South Fraser on Trax will play host to experts from Portland, Ore., at a public meeting at 7 p.m. on Jan. 12 at the Langley township council hall.

And a \$400,000 provincial study on valley rail, which focuses on whether a business case exists, is expected to be complete in the spring.

www.teamstersrail.ca