

To Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure:

Please receive this letter which is in support of the Vancouver Island Transportation Corridor Coalition (VITCC) and its advocacy of having the former E&N rail corridor (now "Island Rail") upgraded to modern transportation standards. Much depends on your support of this endeavour.

The Island Rail Corridor has been an important part of Vancouver Island's transportation network for nearly 140 years. However, through a lack of investment it risks disappearing altogether. As the great Canadian singer Joni Mitchell put it: "you don't know what you've got 'till its gone."

All too common events like flooding, landslides, and accidents have stopped traffic on the Island Highway and on other highways. They have resulted in barriers to the flow of goods and people that create inequality, in addition to causing delays. Yet the rail corridor is still there.

Adequate funding will make the rail transportation corridor even more important in the Island's future as it will provide an alternative to road-only transportation which is so desperately needed.

Why is this important?

In today's world, economic and social development is heavily dependent on proper access to good transportation options. Changes in climate and limited road-transportation corridors have exacerbated the situation. This is very evident on Vancouver Island, and it needs serious attention:

- Growing extreme weather events like those experienced last fall.
- Limited transportation corridors that were affected by flooding, snow, etc.
- Alternative for those who drive and an option for those who don't.
- Continuing population growth along with relocation of residents to central parts of the Island for more affordable housing, even at the greater expense of longer commutes.
- Rail is more efficient at moving freight and passengers and is proven to draw people out of their cars.
- Rail can shape our urban environments in a manner more positive than other modes, namely the car.
- It can co-exist with other modes in a multi-modal transportation system, like the ability to carry bikes on board.
- Rail has, and can once again, encourages and supports the Island's tourism industry and the jobs and tax revenues it generates.

Currently, residents of this island are inadequately connected, as the only way to travel is by car and by a very limited bus service. This affects especially seniors, students, those without cars, and those who can not drive. But as you know the costs of adding highway capacity, both in construction and in environmental losses, including to precious wetlands, is horrendously high and is no longer acceptable in today's climate.

With our growing population on Vancouver Island, we need diversity in our transportation options. One that can complement our existing highway networks, while embracing both biking and hiking trails as an integrated part of a redeveloped state-of-the-art Island railway network.

That is why we urge Honourable Members of Provincial and Federal governments to seriously consider the business plan put forth by the Island Corridor Foundation. Activation of that plan will make viable, for years to come, the Island Corridor's rail system.

The lack of dependable transportation options impacts me personally. Here's how ... (explain the impact on your life, your social connections, business, volunteering, etc.).

Looking forward, rail will play an increasingly important role in reducing B.C.'s carbon footprint, development of climate change resilience, and allow citizens to move freely to participate in the Canadian economy.

Transportation alternatives are important. Please consider this request.