

## **VIA RAIL'S 2023 ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS JUNE 7, 2023**

This document contains answers to the most frequently asked questions received as part of VIA Rail Canada's 2023 Annual Public Meeting.

We would like to thank the public for their participation and interest in VIA Rail.

Please note that questions of the same nature have been grouped together and that the grammar and syntax of the questions received have been corrected.

The audio recording of VIA Rail's 2023 Annual Public Meeting is available to listen to, in English and in French, on VIA Rail's YouTube channel and Facebook Page.

We also invite you to consult VIA Rail's 2022 annual report, available in our [Media Centre](#).

### **AIR QUALITY ONBOARD**

**Q1. I have seen seemingly high CO2 level measurements taken onboard and shared by passengers on social media. Are those levels safe? Is the air ventilation and filtration adequate on the trains?**

As for all public transport vehicles, train cars are equipped with heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems to circulate, exchange and filter air inside the passenger compartment while maintaining temperature and humidity comfort levels. Air from the interior of the train is extracted through air ducts and a portion is removed and replaced with fresh air from the exterior. The inside and outside air mixture is filtered and circulated back inside the cabin.

VIA Rail conducted extensive testing, in accordance with the appropriate measurement protocols, confirming that CO2 levels on board our trains are well below the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) recommended exposure limits for carbon dioxide adopted by the Government of Canada.

Additionally, to ensure we capture as many particles or droplets in the air as possible, the totality of our cars in service have been fitted with upgraded MERV filters. This is in accordance with the recommendations from the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers.

### **COMMUTERS**

**Q2. When will VIA Rail bring back train 651? When will VIA Rail bring back trains 82 and 83?**

**When could we see better frequencies in the west end of the Corridor, most of the 80's series trains 83,85,86,88 do not run anymore. Is there a plan in place to reinstate further service to the London-Sarnia Corridor?**



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VIA Rail is currently operating in the Québec City-Windsor corridor a daily average of 50 frequencies compared to 62 daily frequencies (pre-COVID-19). Although our train services were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of available rolling stock is the core reason we are unable to resume our full schedule.

We understand this is disappointing for several communities, but like other businesses in the transportation industry, we are working to find the balance between understanding the new travel needs of our passengers and deploying our limited equipment to provide service to the highest number of Canadians.

With the progressive introduction of VIA Rail's 32 new trainsets beginning this spring and continuing through 2025, VIA Rail will begin rebuilding its car inventory and that should allow the Corporation to eventually plan the return of some suspended frequencies.

### **LONG-DISTANCE AND REGIONAL FLEET**

**Q3. In past corporate plans, VIA Rail indicated that the Renaissance fleet was nearing the end of life. What plan is in place to operate the train when the equipment must be withdrawn? When will the long-distance and regional fleet be replaced with new equipment? Has a request been put into the federal government for funds?**

The long-distance and regional services are an integral part of VIA Rail's mandate to operate the national passenger rail service.

For that reason and as part of our, mandate, mission, and vision, in 2022 VIA Rail launched the first official step towards the replacement of its long-distance and regional fleet by submitting a business case to the Government of Canada.

The fleet serving these routes was manufactured in the 1950s. Replacing it will allow VIA Rail to provide a more comfortable, modern, accessible, and sustainable travel experience.

### **MONTREAL-GASPÉ ROUTE**

**Q4. Do you eventually have a return plan for the route Montréal-Gaspé, considering that the work on the track is progressing well?**

The tracks in the Gaspésie region belong to the Government of Québec, and the infrastructure is currently undergoing a rehabilitation program to eventually permit a return to passenger service. VIA Rail intends to resume service to the Gaspésie region once the tracks are deemed safe for the operation of passenger trains and that the infrastructure enables the service all the way to Gaspé with competitive trip times.

### **CURRENT SERVICES**

**Q5. Will Park cars return to The Ocean? Could they be replaced by Skyline cars? When will we see the Panorama cars back in service?**

Due to various factors including operational considerations and a lack of available rolling stock, VIA Rail will continue to operate the *Ocean* route without Park and Skyline cars until further notice. As for the Panorama cars, they are currently undergoing repair work and slated to return to service in summer 2024.

## **FARES, PASSES, DISCOUNTS AND PROMOTIONS**

**Q6. Can we expect to have the commuter passes back? When will the rail passes be available again? What is VIA Rail's intentions to commuter pass and midweek pass, to better adapt them to the new realities, especially considering the growth of teleworking?**

As part of our efforts to continue modernizing and improving the overall customer journey, we are currently rethinking our travel pass offer with the aim of creating products that are better adapted to our clients' needs. These new travel passes will be launched later this year following the introduction of our new reservation system.

## **BAGGAGES AND BIKES**

**Q7. When will bike service return to the Corridor? What will be the additional cost for a bike on board the train? Why are trains no longer allowing checked bikes to be brought on trains?**

Our current fleet of trains in the Québec City-Windsor corridor is being replaced over the next several years by a new fleet of trains that will provide an unparalleled, barrier-free, and fully accessible travel experience.

During this transition, and due to a lack of available equipment, all baggage cars have been removed from our Corridor trains, so the transport of bicycles and other large items is temporarily suspended.

We thank our passengers for their understanding and patience on this matter and want to reassure them that they will be able to transport their bikes on the new Corridor trains which will be equipped with bike racks.

Committed to providing the best possible experience when transporting bicycles in the Corridor, VIA Rail will reintroduce this feature once there are enough new trains to guarantee this service on roundtrips.

As always, bike transport remains available in baggage cars on our long-distance and our regional routes.

## **INTERMODALITY**

**Q8. Why is VIA Rail abandoning intermodality? Intermodal connections such as GO Transit, Maritime Bus, and the REGIM Campbellton-Gaspé shuttle can no longer be booked through Reservia. Is this a permanent change or a temporary one pending implementation of the new reservations system?**



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Working on the creation of our new reservation system gave us the opportunity to review the way we support our customers in planning their journey.

As a result, VIA Rail has discontinued the sale of some partner tickets directly through its sales channels and will instead provide links to our third-party transit partners on the VIA Rail website.

We informed our partners that VIA Rail would no longer accommodate third-party ticket sales for external operators and offered to work with them to find alternative solutions.

Every partner that we worked with was able to find a solution, except for the RÉGÎM (Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie – Îles-de-la-Madeleine).

We proactively offered several solutions to the RÉGÎM, including some that could be implemented at zero additional cost to them, to keep the service going, and all our offers were left unanswered, they chose to cancel their service.

We want to assure you that we remain committed to supporting an intermodal journey and we are determined to keep working with all players in the travel industry as we continue to explore the best ways to offer a more seamless journey.

### **SERVICE EXPANSION**

**Q9. With the possibility of VIA Rail acquiring new rolling stock for their long-distance services in the future, are increased frequencies and restoration of any former routes being considered? Will you expand services on The Canadian? Will you expand services on The Ocean?**

We recognize that travel options could be improved in some regions of the country and, as the national passenger rail service, we want to be able to serve as many Canadians as possible. However, we must always do so by considering equipment availability and responsibly managing the budget allocated by the government of Canada to carry out our mandate.

While we are always interested in exploring new routes, we unfortunately do not have the resources at this time (i.e., equipment, infrastructure, tracks, stations) required to expand our services. VIA Rail remains committed to serving communities across Canada and as part of the Corporation's long-term vision, we continue to work with communities and governments to evaluate service expansion.

### **NEW FLEET**

**Q10. When will we see the New Fleet in use? Will it still be by the end of 2023 or is there a delay in that start?**

During fall 2022, significant milestones were reached with our new Corridor fleet. We welcomed aboard our first customers, and it was a moment of great pride for VIA Rail. Since then, our new train has been running regularly between Montréal and Ottawa.



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In 2023, we will be delivering several more of our new trainsets as we are moving into full commercial service, allowing even more of our customers to travel on our more modern, comfortable, and accessible trains.

We expect to receive all 32 of these new trains by the end of 2025.