



Rail Freight Service Review
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January 29, 2010

Sent via email: rfsr-esmf@tc.gc.ca

Re: Rail Freight Service Review

On behalf of the members of the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC), I am pleased to make this submission to assist in the important work of the Rail Freight Service Review Panel.

The OBAC represents local governments in the region of British Columbia between Valemount and Smithers, and is led by a Board of the region's Mayors and Regional District Chairs. The members of the Coalition are:

The Village of Burns Lake	The City of Prince George
The District of Fort St. James	The Town of Smithers
The Village of Fraser Lake	The Village of Telkwa
The Village of Granisle	The Village of Valemount
The District of Houston	The District of Vanderhoof
The District of Mackenzie	The Regional District of Bulkley - Nechako
The Village of McBride	The Regional District of Fraser - Fort George

I will begin by providing the Panel with a brief overview of the freight rail system in the region: Rail is an extremely important component of the OBAC Region's transportation infrastructure. Prince George is the northern BC headquarters for CN Rail; they own or lease the region's entire rail infrastructure. CN rail lines link Prince Rupert to Prince George, and link Prince George to points south and east. CN moves goods and commodities produced in the region across North America and to Asia through Prince Rupert. The forestry and mining sector largely rely on rail to ship product as it is the most efficient means for bulk shipping. The recently constructed Prince George Inter-modal Terminal is designed to support the growth of container shipping to and from Asia and the US. This allows the efficient transfer of goods from truck to rail. Regular service allows containers to be moved by rail from the Prince George Inter-modal Terminal to the Port of Prince Rupert. Rail is also the preferred method for shipments of coal from Northern BC to Prince Rupert and Vancouver ports. Manufacturing industries need spur lines when they wish to connect directly to rail for shipment of their goods. Currently spur lines are located at Babine Sawmills, the Village of Burns Lake, Decker Lake Sawmills, Kennedy Siding near Mackenzie Junction; and a few other private parcels located in the OBAC Region. CN provides the switch needed to connect spur lines, but the cost of construction of the line is born by the party requiring the spur. There is an existing rail bed, known as the Dease Extension, passing north through Upper Skeena. The bed is in place, but tracks have not been laid. This presents an opportunity to facilitate mine development and provide better access for forest harvesting. The area has a number of potential mine developments and is an important part of the province's mid-term timber supply plans. In the future, this line is one of the options for a rail linkage from Alaska and Yukon through the OBAC region to the rest of North America. The Alaskan and Yukon governments have shown considerable interest in this development, as it would provide a means to ship their products efficiently to the rest of North America.

Working closely with the Province and local stakeholders, and subject-matter experts, the OBAC has developed a series of regional strategies aimed at developing more resilient communities and a diversified economy in the region. We would like to draw to the Panel's attention several key components of the [Regional Integrated Infrastructure Strategy](#). One of the Strategy's major recommendations is to "Ensure that the region's new and existing transportation infrastructure provides for safe, cost effective, and expeditious movement of people, goods, and services." Under that recommendation, the strategy proposes a number of action items that are specifically targeted at improving rail freight services in the region. A synopsis of these is as follows:

- Improve communications between CN Rail and their current and potential clients.
- Monitor customer satisfaction by establishing a process that is controlled by a third party.
- Facilitate the establishment of commercial spur lines by ensuring that the needs of multiple commercial interests can be addressed.
- Assess the feasibility of extending the rail line from its existing terminus in Minaret to Dease Lake, and in the longer term, assess whether a project to connect this line to Alaska and Yukon is feasible.
- Improve rail related infrastructure where needed to address safety and road traffic impediments at crossings, and to provide grade separations.
- Develop an integrated intermodal strategy for the region to support a hub in Prince George.

As community leaders in a region that is heavily dependent upon rail freight services, we consider the Rail Freight Service Review to be of high importance, and encourage you to proactively seek input from the industries and businesses that are current or potential customers in northern and central British Columbia.

We would be pleased to provide you with additional information on request, and have no objection to this submission being published on the Rail Freight Service Review website.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Bassermann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Don Bassermann, Chair
Omineca Beetle Action Coalition

Cc/ Northwest Corridor Development Corporation
MLA Pat Bell
MLA Shirley Bond
MLA John Rustad