

Appendix C

to Open Letter to the City of Victoria dated June 29, 2010

Background Information

Political/Economic Implications

of having no E&N Commuter Rail to Victoria

It's been decades since Victoria has lived up to its potential as the southern terminus of the E&N rail line. The E&N is a key link holding together the string of population centres strung out along the east coast of Vancouver Island. Sadly, this railroad has been — until recently taken over by the publicly-owned Island Corridor Foundation — poorly managed and grossly underused.

There have been efforts to improve the situation. In November 1984, VIA Rail, the Federal Crown Corporation which operates the E&N passenger service, succeeded in having the Victoria station moved from Victoria West to its current site at the foot of Pandora Street. Passenger numbers, which had been lagging until then, subsequently improved.

If Victoria City Council refuses to fund a rail link for either a refurbished or a new Johnson Street bridge, then the Victoria VIA station will be forced back to Victoria West. That is a bad decision for two reasons:

First, it will demonstrate to VIA Rail, who has continued to provide E&N Dayliner service through thick and thin over the last 30 years, that the City of Victoria lacks commitment to our Island rail network.

Second, it is a huge impediment for any effort to improve Victoria's public transit service. It will undercut the ability of the E&N to move passengers right into the downtown area. Worse yet, if the present rail link between the City of Victoria, Esquimalt, the Western Communities and all the other towns up-Island is cut, local merchants stand to lose many customers, both current and potential.

Like it or not, someday in the not-to-distant future there will be a Light Rail Transit system connecting CRD communities. Will one of its anchors be Victoria's Downtown or will it shift, along with so many relocated businesses, to Uptown?

Cutting the rail link across the Johnson Street bridge would be shortsighted and detrimental to the future of our city. We also ask the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association to stand up — to protect the future livelihood of its members and to ensure a vibrant future for Downtown Victoria.

Don't be hasty; don't shortchange Victoria's future! We have a rail link on the Johnson Street bridge: let's keep it!