



# TEAMSTERS CANADA RAIL CONFERENCE DIVISION 320



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**Subject: Light Rail Passenger Service in Fraser Valley**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Appended you will find a news article posted on the TCRC National website regarding the above subject matter.

## **Rail reality grows with Hydro's revelation**

**Published:** July 7th 2009

**Source:** By Brian Lewis, The Province

Advocates for establishing a light-rail passenger service in the Fraser Valley have found an ally in B.C. Hydro.

And, not surprisingly, they've also found an opponent in mighty Canadian Pacific Ltd., the railway-based corporation that many have loved to hate throughout its century-plus history.

In fact, it's the ever-present power of Canadian Pacific that led Langley Township Mayor Rick Green to issue a media release yesterday that he hopes will stop CP in its tracks.

The release announced that Langley has a letter from Hydro stating that the utility will continue to protect its historical rights to run passenger-rail service on a section of railway line it sold to CP years ago.

Known as the Pratt-Livingston Corridor, the track runs from 232nd Street, near Trinity Western University, through the downtown cores of the township and Langley City, then west to Cloverdale.

This line was sold by B.C. Hydro to CP in the late 1980s for its coal and container-train service to Deltaport.

But Hydro's retained passenger-service rights reflect its historical roots in the early 1900s, when its private-sector predecessor, B.C. Electric, owned and operated its extensive, electrified interurban tram service between Vancouver and Chilliwack.

Obviously, when the B.C. government of the day decided that Hydro should exit the railway business, some bureaucrat had enough sense to protect the public interest in case the call for public rail transit in the Valley returned.

And it did. Public pressure is mounting on provincial and federal politicians to re-establish light-rail transit in the region as an environmentally friendly alternative to motor vehicles.

However, the 21-year-old agreement between Hydro and CP, which protected those passenger rights, only became public knowledge last April.

The rights will expire on Aug. 29, unless they're renewed at the option of either party.

According to several sources, even some of the executives at CP didn't know Hydro had retained its rights to public rail service. Nor, I'm told, were they amused.

"I have no doubt that this agreement is CP's worst nightmare," Green said yesterday.

Not only does CP have to set aside up to one-third of its wheelage (traffic) for public light-rail use, it also has to do it for free.

By contrast, CP makes millions of dollars annually by allowing TransLink to operate the West Coast Express on its northern line into Vancouver.

Now, according to the grapevine, CP is lobbying the Gordon Campbell government to block Hydro's intention of exercising its legal option of renewing the agreement that will protect public use of the line for another 21 years.

This worries Green and other mayors south of the Fraser who fear the B.C. Liberals may cave into pressure from CP and order Hydro to back off.

For its part, CP said yesterday it's still reviewing the agreement and had no further comment.

But Hydro said yesterday it has sent a letter to CP, saying it will exercise its option and renew the agreement. So far, so good.

[www.teamstersrail.ca](http://www.teamstersrail.ca)

In Solidarity,

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