

# Network Southwest

## Passenger Rail and Bus Service Action Plan

A grassroots response to Southwestern Ontario's widening mobility gap

*Network Southwest* is citizen-driven. The VIA Rail cuts in Southwestern Ontario in 2012 were a wake-up call to citizens in Sarnia, Stratford, St. Marys, Chatham, and Toronto. Intercity bus routes have also been decimated, leaving many communities with much reduced public transportation or none at all. In November 2013, the Southwest Economic Alliance, an organization created by municipal governments, held a transportation summit in London. The formation of the Southwestern Ontario Transportation Alliance stems from these initiatives. Funding for the *Network Southwest* research project and a series of public forums has come from local businesses and individual donations. Public forums to present the vision commenced in Sarnia in January.

Based on existing technology and proven models from competitive regions

*Network Southwest* is a plan drawing on best practices from the most successful models of regional high performance rail and integrated feeder bus networks from around the United States and other jurisdictions that compete with Ontario for investment and jobs. The key to success for other regions has been strong cooperation between all levels of government, and taking a systems approach to entire regional networks. *Network Southwest* will provide more frequent service with new equipment on our three existing rail lines to Sarnia, Windsor, and Niagara Falls, forming the backbone of a comprehensive regional network with connecting bus routes serving communities from Fort Erie, to Kingsville, to Owen Sound. Upgraded stations will provide local economic hubs and coordinated schedules will facilitate easy connections between services.

Practical at a modest cost and with rapid results

Using the existing rail and highway systems and building upon previous infrastructure investments, *Network Southwest* can be implemented over a five-year period with incremental improvements each year. The proposed investment of \$400 million will yield at least \$1.2 billion in economic stimulus. Ten new bi-level push-pull trains, built with Ontario content, will significantly reduce operating costs. Cooperation between governments will remove duplication of effort. Integrated ticketing, improved frequencies, and common branding will drive revenue. New routes will be phased in as ridership grows. Like all other forms of transport, *Network Southwest* will continue to require operating grants from senior levels of government, but greater efficiency will allow existing grants to stretch to provide a balanced transportation network that offers the connectivity businesses and communities need to thrive, and to serving more passengers across the region.

Get on board

Join us in building public support for *Network Southwest*. Stay informed through our website at [www.swota.ca](http://www.swota.ca), or better yet, invite us to present to your community or organization. Tell your local councillor, MP, and MPP about the concept and why our communities need them to work together to deliver results.

