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Sonja Mihelcic honored

Known for her involvements in initiatives like Hike, Bike and Bus Week, Clean Air Day, Environment Week and Steer Clear, local Sierra Club Chapter Director Sonja Mihelcic was honored at the recent ETS Community Conference with the first annual Gerry Wright Better Transit Award. For the past six years, Mihelcic has devoted her efforts to campaigns that promote alternatives to the automobile. Also among her accomplishments were fundraising efforts that helped realize Edmonton's first conference on sustainable transportation last June.

The Gerry Wright Better Transit Award was introduced as a joint effort between the local transit advocacy group Citizens for Better Transit and the ETS Advisory Board. The Award is named after former city councillor and U of A professor Gerry Wright, who was known for his support of quality of life initiatives like transit improvement and LRT.

The Award was sponsored by Siemens Canada and the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 569.



Back row, left to right: Kevin Brown, Citizens for Better Transit; Graeme Feltham, ETS Advisory Board; Daniel Revega, ATU 569. **Front row:** Sonja Mihelcic, Award Recipient; Inge Congdon, Siemens Canada.
 [Photo: CFBT]

Wellington New Zealand joins list of world cities renewing commitment to electric trolley buses



Prototype low floor trolley bus for Wellington by Designline. [Photo: G. Inwood]

They're quiet, they don't pollute the streets, and Wellingtonians identify with them. But one of the main reasons behind the Greater Wellington Regional Council's decision this month to move forward with plans to renew its 60 vehicle electric trolley bus fleet is long-term sustainability. With world oil prices now approaching \$60 per barrel, the economic advantages of relying on petroleum to power transit fleets are bound to come to an end. "Upgrading the trolley buses is an important part of securing the long-term future of Wellington's transport network," said Ian Buchanan, Chair of the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Wellington operates a trolley bus system of similar size to Edmonton's. Their current fleet is also of about the same age as Edmonton's, dating from 1983, and is powered by equipment made by the same manufacturer. The service is privately operated by Stagecoach, with an annual subsidy of about \$1 million for maintaining the overhead wires provided by the Regional Council.

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Wellington renews trolley fleet (con't)

A prototype low floor trolley bus was designed for Wellington by bus manufacturer Designline in 2003 and has undergone testing. The prototype reuses some equipment from the existing trolley fleet, but the key electrical equipment is upgraded. The Council's decision gives the green light to renewing the rest of the fleet. "The new trolley buses will be the equivalent of modern diesels in accessibility and comfort, as well as being quieter, less polluting and more reliable," said Buchanan. For instance, new equipment on the prototype has reduced the incidence of 'dewiring' (losing contact with the overhead wires) by over 50%.

The global nature of business in the 21st century is reflected in Wellington's new trolleys. While the chassis and body are manufactured in Ashburton New Zealand, the pneumatic retriever system comes from Beijing China and new electrical components come from Brazil.

With its trolley bus fleet renewal program getting underway, Wellington joins a large number of other world cities with trolley systems, both small and large, that are investing in new trolley fleets.

[Source: Wellington Regional Council press release, March 31, 2005]

Transit Expert urges Edmonton to invest more in public transit

Speaking at a luncheon of the Downtown Business Association on March 4th, president of the Canadian Urban Transit Association Michael Roschlau pointed out the urgent need to invest in quality public transit. Using examples from Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver, Roschlau illustrated how public transit services in Edmonton are not seeing the same level of investment. "Edmonton is lagging behind", he said.

Roschlau went on to explain the connection between good urban transportation, economic growth and business development. "In particular, rapid transit of the fast, frequent, reliable type is a really important element of maintaining vibrancy, mobility and quality of life, improving the downtown, and preventing congestion with cars. I don't think that kind of rapid transit infrastructure has been keeping pace with growth," he said. Roschlau emphasized good transit is "more than just a bus that stops at every second corner". In large urban areas, it needs to include light rail, subways or commuter rail. [Source: CFBT]



ETC Editorial

by Bob Clark

"The future starts today-not tomorrow"

Pope John Paul II

In the 1970's, Edmonton recognized the implications of the, on that occasion temporary, oil crisis, and took the bold step of introducing modern light rail technology to North America, and of planning substantial conversions of diesel bus routes to electric trolley. Since then we have let the rest of the continent, including our sister city to the south, outstrip us while we got ourselves bogged down in a subterranean mess. For the past three, four, or is it five years we have been trying to dig our way to the surface, bemoaning the cost of our own folly. Of course, we could have laid the surface portions of the South LRT line to Heritage concurrent with the tunnelling for minimal cost, but we missed that opportunity, too.

Now that oil will never again cost less than \$50 a barrel and is on its way to \$100 if the experts are to be believed, the future is indeed here today whether we subscribe to Kyoto or not.

Edmonton has lost the chance to be a pioneer, but must we continue to hide our heads in the sand in the vain hope we can drive our SUVs into the future while China and the rest of the developing world sit on the sidelines and watch?

Electric Transit gets Greener

Epcor and TransAlta cut power emissions with G3

GE Energy, Bechtel and AEP move forward on Clean Coal

Wind power continues to grow in Alberta and worldwide



A joint venture of EPCOR and TransAlta, the new Genesee 3 power plant went on line March 1st 2005, making history as Canada's newest and most efficient coal-fired power generating station. It replaces two old-style generators retired December 31, 2004 at Lake Wabamun. Genesee 3 represents the latest in technological advancement with its combination of a supercritical pressure boiler with a high efficiency steam turbine. The new process uses less coal per megawatt hour of electricity produced than conventional coal-fired generation. This has big benefits in emissions reduction.

Genesee 3 produces half the nitrogen oxide emissions of a conventional coal-fired plant, and emissions of fine particulates are reduced by 99.8 percent. Sulphur dioxide emissions will also be cut to a level significantly below provincial standards, and CO₂ emissions will be some 18% lower as well. With the introduction of Genesee 3, Epcor will offset greenhouse gas emissions down to the level of a natural gas plant, a 52% reduction in GHG's.

Genesee 3 is the largest single generation unit ever added to Alberta's power grid, so its implications are significant. The additional capacity is anticipated to cause electricity prices to stabilize or drop. Genesee 3 was also one of the largest and busiest construction sites in Alberta for the past 36 months, with over 2,100 people employed on the project, 42 different construction contractors and 16 unions. The project will open on time, and on budget, according to Epcor President and CEO Don Lowry.

Cleaner and more efficient is clearly the direction power generation is headed in Alberta. Emissions reductions have implications for everything that runs on electricity, from the lighting and heating systems in our homes and offices, to our electric transit systems like LRT and trolley buses. Advocates of electric transportation systems have long asserted that it is much easier to reduce the emissions from a single source like a power generating plant, than it is to control emissions from many independent sources like a fleet of internal combustion engines. The reductions achieved with Genesee 3 are clear proof. Tests done with diesel buses in Edmonton showed the reduction in particulate emissions achieved with modern diesel particulate filters is in the 60-70% range, but the technology at Genesee 3 will achieve a reduction of 99.8 percent reduction in particulate matter. Airborne particulates are blamed for everything from respiratory ailments to cancer and heart disease. Vehicle tailpipes are the source with the greatest health impact.

In other electric news, advancements continue to be made in the area of "clean coal" technology. On April 15th, GE Energy, Bechtel Power Corporation and American Electric Power [AEP] announced a scoping study to determine the costs for implementing IGCC technology. Integrated Gasification Combined-Cycle [IGCC] technology is a way to convert coal into gas, removing most of the sulphur dioxide and other emissions before the gas is used to fire a generator. IGCC technology uses less water and produces much lower emissions than coal-fired plants with current pollution equipment. Another benefit is the potential to remove mercury and carbon dioxide upstream of the combustion process at lower cost than conventional plants. AEP has announced plans to build at least one commercial-scale IGCC plant in the US within five years. According to AEP President Michael Morris, the study with GE and Bechtel is another step forward in building advanced coal-based generation while minimizing environmental impacts. It could help set new industry standards for using coal responsibly in combination with natural gas and green energy sources across North America.



Reddy Kilowatt says "the role of electricity in building sustainable and environmentally responsible transportation systems will grow as we move further into the 21st century."

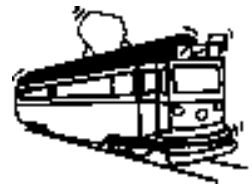
Pincher Creek continues to grow as the center for zero emission wind power in Alberta, providing electricity to some 35,000 homes as well as Calgary's LRT system. In 2001 Pincher Creek was home to 81 wind turbines; by January 2004 the number had grown to 145. Wind generation has injected over \$10 million into the local economy over the last decade. Wind energy is also making headlines around the world. With an average increase in output of 32% annually since 1997, wind energy is the world's fastest growing energy source. In Europe, 33% of all new electricity generation will be via wind power by 2010. Experts expect wind power can reasonably supply at least 20% of Canada's electricity needs.

[Sources: Epcor; Edmonton Journal; General Electric Company; CanWEA]

LRT six times better than diesel bus-based transit – UK study

In a recent study, consultants Steer, Davis and Gleave reviewed the performance of seven British light rail systems and compared them to enhanced bus schemes that use diesel buses. The results revealed light rail to be up to six times better than buses in getting people out of their cars. In Birmingham, for instance, about 20% of LRT passengers indicated they had switched from commuting by car, compared with only 4-6.5% on enhanced bus transit. Run at or near capacity during peak hours, the light rail systems surveyed took more than 22 million car journeys off the road in a year. As passenger numbers rise, the cost effectiveness of light rail grows. It also plays an important role in shaping urban renewal. All UK LRT schemes were found to have led to an increase in commercial and residential property values.

[Source: Passenger Transport Executive Group, February 2005]



"Lets take the tram!"

French City dumps Hybrid Diesel Buses

The French city of Clermond-Ferrand once had big plans to construct a Bus Rapid Transit [BRT] system using French-made Civis hybrid diesel buses. But those plans are no more. Instead, the transit operator SMTC has decided to cancel its contract for more hybrids. The reasons for the move are two-fold: Firstly, the hybrids have proven heavy on maintenance. "There is always something not working, and we never have more than 2 or 3 of the vehicles in service at the same time", SMTC Vice-President Louis Virgoulay told reporters. Secondly, the claimed fuel savings with hybrid technology have not materialized. According to Virgoulay, the hybrids use 50% more fuel than a regular diesel bus.

In Lyon, by contrast, BRT runs successfully with 67 vehicles from the same manufacturer, carrying 55,000 people a day without any problems. However, Lyon bought the trolley bus version of the vehicle, not the hybrid. In the failed Clermont-Ferrand system, local elected officials had believed hybrids would help them avoid an investment in overhead wiring. [Source: Rail & Transports, Dec. 8, 2004]

International Trolley Bus News –

Almere, a growing town in the Dutch region of Flevoland of about 180,000 people, has plans to implement trolley buses on its network of free bus lanes. The system would essentially be an electrically powered BRT "Mixed Mode" scheme. [Source: www.cda-almere.nl]

Work continues in **Rome, Italy** on the re-introduction of trolley buses. Trolley bus overhead continues to be set up on Route 90, the first of two cross-town express services to be converted to electric operation. Regular daily test running over a portion of the route using newly arrived Ganz Solaris articulated low floor trolley buses began in early February. The trolley bus service is expected to open this Fall. [Source: ATC Bologna]

According to the Times of **India** News Network, Delhi government has created a body separate from its transport commission to monitor new transport projects. Projects for 2005 include the further testing of high capacity buses and an electric trolley bus project which was slated to get underway in January in **New Delhi**. [Source: Times of India News Network]

Continually rising petroleum prices have inspired the government in **Vientiane, Laos** to put forward a proposal for the introduction of electric trolley buses. A survey of 3 potential routes has been completed and includes areas of the downtown with frequent service. Khamphay Souvatdy, project coordinator, said that the project is valued at \$100 million U.S. and would use trolley buses imported from Russia. [Source: Vientiane Times, www.vientianetimes.org]

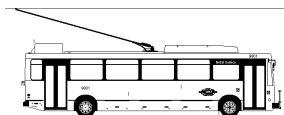
Vancouver is securing the future of its transit system with Canadian built Low Floor Trolley Buses

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Edmonton's investment in its trolley system covers 46 core neighborhoods

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See the Blue pages of your
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