

LttE: Railway bridges often outlast highway ones

Re: :Dangerous drops: West Islander says her car has been hit a few times by debris from overpass," by Jason Magder, The Gazette West Island, Page F19

The Gazette, 23 Aug 2007, Page F7

Avrom David Shtern Green Coalition Transportation Issues

Côte St. Luc

Indeed, pieces of concrete are falling off the Doney Spur bridge.

But that is not the fault of the railway. Railway bridges have outlasted their highway cousins by more than 150 years in some cases.

Roman aqueducts have survived the onslaughts of two millennia.

This bridge was built by the Quebec Ministry of Transport during the post-World War II era when the automobile and the internal combustion engine were unassailable.

We began to regard highways as sacrosanct and part of our birthright. But if society could have disposable diapers and disposable tissues, why not disposable roads? Development was key, not safety. The matter of getting from point A to point B was an afterthought.

Deferred maintenance of our existing road infrastructure as well as the chronic underfunding of mass transit in general and railways in particular have caught up with us.

Railways have been tossed asunder, dismantled and sold for scrap. We must rethink our transportation policies and create genuine alternatives, including establishing a convenient light rail link on the Doney Spur.

Imagine for a moment an environmentally sound, frequent and efficient light rail transit service whisking passengers from the central core of the West Island to an extended métro line at Bois Franc.

In 2002, then Pointe Claire borough chairman Bill McMurchie said that a "MidIsland Surface Metro" LRT on the thenunencumbered Doney Spur "would be an excellent idea."

"It would be absolutely top-rate to have rapid transit downtown available," McMurchie said, as quoted in a Sept. 4, 2002, article, also by Jason Magder.