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CAPT Announces Results of Opportunity Study on Algoma Central Railway ☐

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Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains

CAPT Announces Results of Opportunity Study on Algoma Central Railway

Report Indicates Market Potential for Wilderness Tourism Rail Corridor

October 16, 2007 SAULT STE. MARIE, ON - On October 16th, the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) presented the findings of an opportunity study conducted on the Algoma Central Railway by Douglass Legg from the prestigious firm of Malone Given Parsons Limited with the assistance of researchers from Algoma University's Community Economic and Social Development program, with generous funding from the Job Creation Partnership, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). A comprehensive analysis determined that there is the potential for the ACR line to be successfully revitalized with a newfound emphasis on wilderness tourism. Legg states, "...the study provides the Coalition with a comprehensive go-forward strategy that will support the revitalization of Algoma Central Railway's passenger train as infrastructure for a wilderness tourism rail corridor." That will include further research on product-market match and market readiness issues.

The findings were presented at a CAPT town hall meeting at Algoma University College, along with a presentation on CAPT's strategic plan and a film of Art Gallery of Algoma's Director, Michael Burtch, speaking on the history of the Group of Seven's involvement with the ACR. "We're very pleased with the results of the study," said past CAPT Co-Chair Linda Savory-Gordon. "Incorporating the recommendations of Mr. Legg into our planning will yield us a very sound strategy as we move forward. We're well aware that there are still many obstacles to be overcome, but this is an important milestone."

CAPT Co-Chair Al Errington was encouraged by many of the report's findings. "The report shows that nature-based tourism is growing at an estimated rate of 10-30% annually and that

there are a multitude of outdoors activities that can be enjoyed along the ACR corridor,” said Errington. “CAPT has been saying for a long time that rail travel has a significant impact on the economy, environment and culture of Northern Ontario, so it’s gratifying for us to see those contentions being validated in an objective report like this.”

CAPT Co-Chair, Marie Price concurred. “There’s no question that passenger rail service is an integral economic driver in Algoma district, particularly for the smaller communities,” she said. “A revamped wilderness rail corridor could have economic benefits in terms of new jobs, wealth creation, increased tax revenues and quality of life.”

The opportunity study is the latest step forward in CAPT’s on-going quest to stimulate improvements to passenger rail service in the Algoma district. In April of 2007 a CAPT delegation traveled from Sault Ste. Marie to Hearst and then from Cochrane to Toronto via train to raise awareness. At the conclusion of the journey envoys met with representatives from the provincial and federal governments to discuss the need to treat rail service as infrastructure.

Although the study indicated that the ACR could be rejuvenated as a wilderness rail tourism corridor, bringing that vision into reality is a task that is still fraught with challenges. CAPT plans to meet with stakeholders in smaller communities and First Nations along the rail corridor to build a consensus on how to move forward. The coalition will also continue its advocacy with the various levels of government to promote renewed investment in rail service.

“The study is going to be a good tool for us to use,” said Errington. “We obviously are interested in securing the future of the Algoma Central rail corridor, but we also want to start looking beyond it to the other rail lines that it crosses to develop linkages and schedules that will be convenient for travelers.” With a smile, Errington added, “We have a long way to go, but we’re definitely on the right track.”

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Media Contact Only:

Marie Price, CAPT Co-Chair    Al Errington, CAPT Co-Chair  
(705) 736-2365    Errington’s Wilderness Island Resort  
[cmpland@hotmail.com](mailto:cmpland@hotmail.com)    President of NOTO [www.noto.net](http://www.noto.net)    Nature & Outdoors  
Tourism Ontario  
(705)946-2010 or (705)542-3101  
[Al@WildernessIsland.com](mailto:Al@WildernessIsland.com)

About CAPT: CAPT is a regional group of individuals, businesses and other interests who recognize the significant social, economic, cultural, historical and environmental value of Algoma's Wilderness Passenger and Tour Trains.