

Rail to Banff: A Consultation Train Wreck

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Grizzlies on CP rail line in Banff National Park Photo © N. Douglas

A Calgary-Bow Valley Mass Transit Feasibility Study released last week examined all-year bus and rail mass transit development scenarios from Calgary to Banff. Incredibly the study didn't consider the impact on wildlife of additional rail traffic in the Bow Valley. Given that trains kill wildlife in Banff National Park, AWA believes it's unacceptable for a rail feasibility study to ignore rail's impact on wildlife.

"We know that train strikes killed more than a dozen grizzly bears from 2000 to 2017, a significant percentage of Banff National Park's grizzly population," said AWA's Ian Urquhart. "Hundreds of elk, deer, and black bears have perished this way. But this study, funded by \$350,000 from the provincial government, devotes no thought whatsoever to the impact more, and faster, trains through the Bow Valley will have on wildlife. This is an egregious error."

The report's rail transit option imagines faster trains traveling through the Bow Valley. It imagines adding up to eight roundtrips per day from Calgary to Banff in the summer and six in the winter.

The failure to raise the wildlife impact question was made more likely by the structure of the consultation process. No conservation organizations were part of it. "None of the local, provincial, and national conservation organizations with longstanding concerns and knowledge about the health of wildlife in the Bow Valley were consulted," Urquhart said. "In this 312-page study, the voice for wildlife that conservation organizations offer is completely missing."

AWA believes the report should have considered the impacts increased rail traffic will have on wildlife. It's the wildlife, after all, that attract many visitors to Banff National Park. AWA urges the provincial government to insist that good consultation about mass-transit options from Calgary to Banff must include conservation organizations. It must consider the impacts on wildlife in the Bow Valley.

For more information:

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