



A Guide to Railfanning in Toronto 2009

Toronto Railway Historical Association

The TRHA receives frequent requests from railway enthusiasts seeking information about what there is to do in the city. We have compiled a list of railfan activities around the Greater Toronto Area that one can participate in during 2009.

Toronto Railway Heritage Centre

The railway museum located in the 32-stall John Street Roundhouse is **under construction** throughout 2009.



- **Stalls 1-14** are occupied by Steam Whistle Brewing, which offers regular tours of the brewery as well as a venue for social functions.

<http://www.steamwhistle.ca/>

- **Stalls 18-32** are occupied by Leon's Furniture Store, which is scheduled to open in the summer of 2009.

<http://www.leons.ca/lang.aspx>

- **Stalls 15-16-17** are occupied by the Toronto Railway Heritage Centre, which is now under construction. **It is not anticipated that public tours of the museum section of the Roundhouse will be available in 2009.**

- **Roundhouse Park** contains the following artifacts:

- * The 120-foot rotating **turntable** built in 1929 and recently restored and operational on limited occasions until the museum opens.
- * Several pieces of railway equipment now under cover while museum construction is ongoing. See list below.
- * The 1896 **Don Station**, recently relocated from Todmorden Museum and about to undergo restoration.
- * The 1896 **Cabin D** interlocking tower originally located west of Bathurst St. and its auxiliary building/toolshed, both about to undergo restoration.
- * A restored century-old grade crossing watchman's building.
- * Canadian National steam locomotive **6213**, on display at the Exhibition Grounds since 1960, will be moved to Roundhouse Park in 2009.

Information about the progress of the Toronto Railway Heritage Centre is regularly updated and available at:

<http://www.trha.ca/news.html>

The Museum Collection- Locomotives

# 1	50- Ton Diesel Switcher	Canadian Locomotive Company	1950
#4803	GP7 Diesel Road Switcher	General Motors Division	1953
#6213	4-8-4 Steam Locomotive	Montreal Locomotive Works	1942
#7020	S2 Diesel Switcher	American Locomotive Company	1944

Passenger Cars

Cape Race	Buffet/Solarium/Lounge	National Steel Car/Canadian Pacific	1929
Jackman	14-section Sleeper	Canadian Car & Foundry/CP	1931

Freight Cars

#70	Caboose	Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Ry.	1921
#101	Vinegar Car	Reinhart Vinegars	1938
#188625	Wooden Fowler Boxcar	Canadian Pacific	1917

Union Station

The Toronto Railway Historical Association is working with the City of Toronto and GO Transit, the owners of Union Station, to develop a historical museum presence at this National Historic Site. Meanwhile, **regular monthly tours** of Union Station are held on the last Saturday of every month at 11 AM. More information about the next tour can be found at <http://www.trha.ca/> or by calling 416-917-8220.



The City of Toronto maintains an active website about the history of Union Station and ongoing developments at:

http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/

Heritage Toronto Walks

Two walks with a railway orientation will be led by TRHA Historian Derek Boles in 2009.

Saturday July 11 @ 11 AM

Toronto's Railway Heritage:

A tour of downtown, Union Station and the Railway Lands surrounding the Roundhouse.



Saturday, August 22 @ 1:30 PM

Summerhill/Marlborough:

A tour of a neighbourhood originally shaped by the building of the CPR's North Toronto Subdivision in 1884 and the 1916 North Toronto Station/Summerhill LCBO.

<http://www.heritagetoronto.org/>

Jane's Walk

Saturday, May 2 @ 11 AM.

Toronto's Lost Railway Heritage:

A walk led by Derek Boles, visiting sites in downtown Toronto that once had a railway connection. One of a series of walks named for urban activist Jane Jacobs.

http://www.janeswalk.net/participating_cities/toronto



Doors Open Toronto- 2009

Saturday, May 23 and Sunday, May 24 from 10 AM to 4 PM.

There will be special displays and tours at Union Station. Activities at the Roundhouse are yet to be determined but will include a ride on a live steam miniature railway in Roundhouse Park.

Other venues of railway interest in past years have included:

- * Former CPR North Toronto Station/Summerhill LCBO.
- * TTC Lower Bay subway station
- * TTC Harvey Shops
- * Canadian Pacific Ry. Royal York Hotel

The Toronto Star publishes a supplement listing all the venues on the Thursday before the event. More information at <http://www.toronto.ca/doorsopen/>



Doors Open Markham- 2009

Saturday, August 29 and Sunday August 30 from 10 AM to 4 PM.

The York-Durham Heritage railway operates hourly excursions between Markham and Unionville. Both stations were built by the Toronto & Nipissing Railway in 1871 and feature interpretive displays.



http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_10829_1.html

Railway Excursions

Due to uncooperative railways and insurance regulations, railfan excursions have largely disappeared from common carrier railways in Canada. For those looking for interesting train rides, we recommend the following trips on regularly scheduled trains operating out of Union Station:

GO Transit

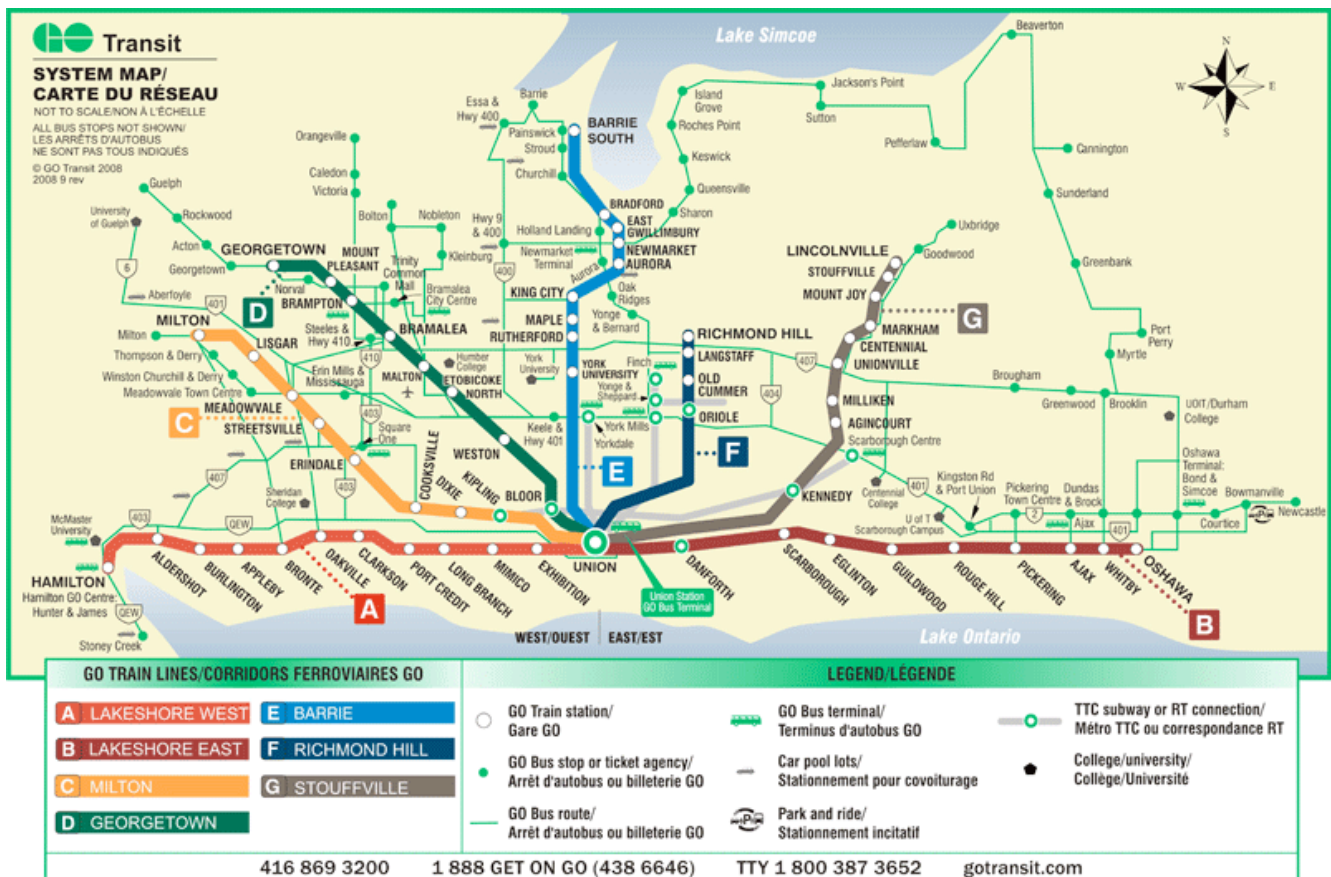
- Tour of the **Lakeshore East** and **Lakeshore West** corridors, which operate 7-days a week in both directions. One way to do this is Union Station east to Oshawa, back through Toronto and west to Aldershot, then back east to Union Station. There are trains every hour in both directions so this is easy to schedule. Be sure to buy a day pass for this trip and you can ride back and forth as often as you want, however this tour will occupy almost five hours without any added stopovers.
- The **Hamilton GO Centre** is well worth a visit. The Centre is housed in the former Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo station opened in 1933 and has been beautifully restored. There is a historical exhibit on the second floor above the ticket windows. Trains only run



through to Hamilton during weekday rush hours so a bus connection between the station and Aldershot will be necessary at other times.

- The **Milton, Georgetown, Barrie, Richmond Hill** and **Stouffville** corridors are peak service in one direction on weekdays only so scheduling is much more difficult, although possible using buses in one direction. The Richmond Hill line is recommended as being particularly scenic.

<http://www.gotransit.com/>



VIA Rail

Short one-day excursions are possible on most of VIA's routes out of Toronto. The following are recommended:

- **Toronto to Niagara Falls.** Depart Union Station at 0830, arriving Niagara at 1033. Return from Niagara to Toronto at 1130, 1415 or 1745. Some of these trains are not daily.
- **Toronto to London.** Depart Union Station at 1105 via Guelph and Kitchener, arriving London at 1420. Depart London 1547 and return by a different route via Brantford and Aldershot, arriving back in Toronto at 1753.

Be sure to check with VIA before making any definite plans.

http://www.viarail.ca/en_index.html



Toronto-Niagara Bike Train

These one day excursions to Niagara Falls and back were very popular in 2008 and will run from June 25 to September 21, 2009. The trains have provisions for carrying bicycles without having to disassemble and box them. In 2008, the return fare was \$59.

<http://www.biketrain.ca/>



Other Railway Museums

• Aside from the Toronto Railway Heritage Centre, there is only one museum in the GTA specifically devoted to rail and that is the *Halton County Radial Railway* which, although located 40 miles west of the city, is Toronto's semi-official traction museum, featuring streetcars, interurbans and subway cars. In addition to the displays, there are rides on some of the restored electric cars along a one-mile section of the former Toronto Suburban Railway.

<http://www.hcry.org/>



• The *Markham District Historical Museum* on Highway 48 has some railway displays, including the relocated CPR Locust Hill station, the business car Acadia, a snowplow, and a caboose.

<http://www.markham.ca/Markham/Attractions/Museum/>



Tourist Trains

There are several tourist train operations in the GTA located outside the city so you would need a car to get to them. They are mostly diesel-hauled operations except for South Simcoe and the Waterloo Central which feature steam, but check with them first since their steam operations have been irregular in recent years.

• *Credit Valley Explorer Tour Train*

<http://www.creditvalleyexplorer.com/>



• *South Simcoe Railway*

<http://www.southsimcoerailway.ca/>



• *Waterloo Central Railway*

<http://www.steam-train.org/>



• *York-Durham Heritage Railway*
(Hourly GO service on weekends from Union Station Bus Terminal)

<http://www.ydhr.on.ca/WelcomePage.html>



• *Guelph Junction Express*

<http://www.destinytours.com/gje/>



Train Watching in Toronto

There are numerous locations in Toronto from which you can safely observe trains.

- **Union Station** hosts over 230 trains daily on weekdays although you can't actually see them from the station unless you are outside under the trainshed. Security is being considerably tightened in 2009 by both the City and GO Transit. Photography is not allowed under the trainshed and it's a paid fare zone, meaning that you could be fined if you are found there without a ticket. Neither GO nor VIA allow photography in their sections of the Union Station interior.



- There are better vantage points from which to observe and photograph trains just **west of Union Station**. The Skywalk provides a fine view although the windows make photography difficult. There are outside vantage points with unobstructed views around the CN Tower. Both the Bathurst and Spadina road bridges provide excellent vantage points with spectacular views and have ample sidewalks. In addition to the scheduled VIA and GO trains, there are frequent positioning moves between Union Station and the passenger yards in Mimico as well as occasional CN freight trains using the High Line.



- **East of Union Station** is much more problematic for photography since the area surrounding the rail corridor is 18 feet lower than the tracks. The first road bridge crossing the rail corridor is at Main Street in the east end of town. Much further east at Port Union, just west of the Rouge Hill GO station, is a new park along the lakeshore that parallels the tracks on the south side. Trains move through there fast and without much warning so a timetable is necessary.



- One of the most famous train watching locations in North America is **Bayview Junction** near Hamilton. One can comfortably observe and photograph CN, CP, VIA, Amtrak and GO trains from this spot. Every summer there is an informal gathering of dozens of railfans who spend the day picnicking, socializing and taking photographs.



<http://www.trainweb.org/railsintoronto/bayjct.html>

- Paul Cordingley's *Rails in Toronto* website is useful for information about accessible vantage points for train watching around the city although the site hasn't been updated for some time. Paul has divided the site into several geographic areas so be sure to investigate the links leading to each area.

<http://www.trainweb.org/railsintoronto/index.html>



C.P.R. North Toronto Station

The Canadian Pacific Railway North Toronto Station opened in 1916 and remained in service until 1930. It is one of the finest examples in Canada of railway station Beaux-Arts architecture and was beautifully restored in 2003. The building now houses the largest liquor store in Ontario and can be visited during regular LCBO hours of operation. <http://www.lcbo.ca/lcbo-ear/jsp/storeinfo.jsp?STORE=10>



Train Yards and Equipment Shops

None of the train yards and shops in the GTA encourage visitors and trespassing on railway property is now dealt with harshly. One can observe the action in these facilities at a distance from sidewalks on nearby public roads and bridges. Paul Cordingley's website provides useful advice on finding good vantage points.

- Canadian Pacific Railway **Toronto Yard**
<http://www.trainweb.org/railsintoronto/eastend.html>
- Canadian National Railway **Macmillan Yard**
<http://www.trainweb.org/railsintoronto/nortor.html>
- GO Transit **Willowbrook Yard**
<http://www.trainweb.org/railsintoronto/westend.html>
- VIA Rail **Toronto Maintenance Centre**
<http://www.trainweb.org/railsintoronto/westend.html>



Train Stores

There are numerous train/hobby shops in the GTA although surprisingly few in the city of Toronto itself. The best-known shop in the area is **George's Trains**, which closed its store at 510 Mt. Pleasant Rd. in May 2009 after 47 years at that location. George's has now been consolidated at their Markham location, the former Railview Trains operated by the late Dave Morgan until 2007.

- * **550 Alden Rd.** (905-470-6200) is in Markham near Warden Ave. and Hwy 407 and is not easily accessible by transit although it is possible using the TTC and York Region Transit. The store is located adjacent to CN's York Subdivision, which sees frequent freight train service throughout the day.

[George's Trains](#)



- The **Credit Valley Railway Company** is located west of Toronto at 184 Queen Street South in Mississauga. This is an exclusively-trains store with an extensive stock and knowledgeable staff.

[The Credit Valley Railway Company Ltd](#)



- **Crossbuck Hobbies** is located east of Toronto in Pickering on Brock Road.

[Crossbuck Hobbies](#)



The TRHA does not imply an endorsement of these stores over any others not listed. A more complete listing of train stores in the GTA can be found in the back pages of a recent issue of Model Railroader or Canadian Railway Modeler magazines.

Club Model Railroad Layouts

There are several model railroad clubs in Toronto and the GTA that regularly schedule open houses on weekends for casual visitors and families. Most of them will also welcome serious hobbyists at other times. Always check first to see if you are welcome.

- One of the most outstanding train layouts in Canada is **Aberfoyle Junction**, located west of the city near Guelph. The layout is a huge 0-scale recreation of southern Ontario in the 1950s and has been written up extensively in Model Railroader. The club usually schedules open houses on weekends in the spring and fall.



[Aberfoyle Junction](#)

- The **Model Railroad Club of Toronto** is one of the oldest clubs in Canada and is located downtown west of Strachan Avenue. Founded in 1938, the club was for many years located in Union Station. The club hosts open houses in February and allows individual visits on Wednesday evenings.

[Model Railroad Club of Toronto](#)



- The **Scarborough Model Railroad Club** was formed in 1962 and features both HO and N-scale layouts. The club is located near Birchmount and Danforth roads in the former City of Scarborough. The club features both open houses on selected Sunday and individual visits on Tuesday evenings.

[Scarborough Model Rail Roaders](#)



- **York Railway Modellers** is located at 5 Oakland Avenue in the former city of North York near the intersections of Hwys 400 & 401. The 40 x 40 foot layout models the popular steam-diesel transition era. The club hosts open houses and individual layout visits.

[York Railway Modellers](#)



Toronto Transportation Commission

The TTC is the largest transit system in Canada and the third busiest in North America. In addition to its 1,500+ buses, the TTC operates three services of interest to railfans.



Subway

The subway system consists of three routes:

1. **Yonge-University-Spadina** line was completed in stages between 1954 and 1996 and travels in a U from Yonge and Finch all the way downtown to Union Station then up University and Spadina to Downsview. Parts of the line are in the open between Bloor and Eglinton and along the northern section of the Spadina line.

2. **Bloor-Danforth** line is the cross-town route from Kipling in the west to Kennedy in the east. It was completed between 1966 and 1980 and is in the open at the far ends and in one spectacular crossing of the Don Valley underneath the Bloor Viaduct. At the east end it parallels the old Canadian Northern Railway route through Scarborough.



3. **Sheppard** line is the newest part of the subway, completed in 2002 and running entirely underground from Yonge to Don Mills. For many years, Toronto was derided for its plain subway station architecture and decoration, especially compared with Montreal. The Sheppard line's stations are of some architectural interest. Many railfans riding the subway position themselves in the front car where they are able to obtain a driver's eye view of the train's progress through the tunnels. There is almost always someone (including many fathers and young sons!) occupying this space so the best way to obtain a seat is to ride the train to the end and wait for the space to become available.

Streetcars

There are 11 streetcar routes in Toronto, most of them of the old fashioned street running style that has disappeared from many cities in North America. Among the more interesting routes are:

501 QUEEN: at 15.4 miles between Long Branch in the west and Neville Park in the east, this is one of the longest streetcar lines in North America. At the west end of the line is a scenic private right-of-way and the interesting Humber loop where some cars short turn.

509 HARBOURFRONT: runs from the underground platform at Union Station, through a tunnel beneath Bay Street, along at-grade private right-of-way on Queens Quay, some street running, then onto a newly created private right-of-way on Fleet Street and into Exhibition Loop.



Scarborough RT

This 4-mile rapid transit line in Scarborough operates mostly on elevated tracks between Kennedy subway station and McCowan Rd.

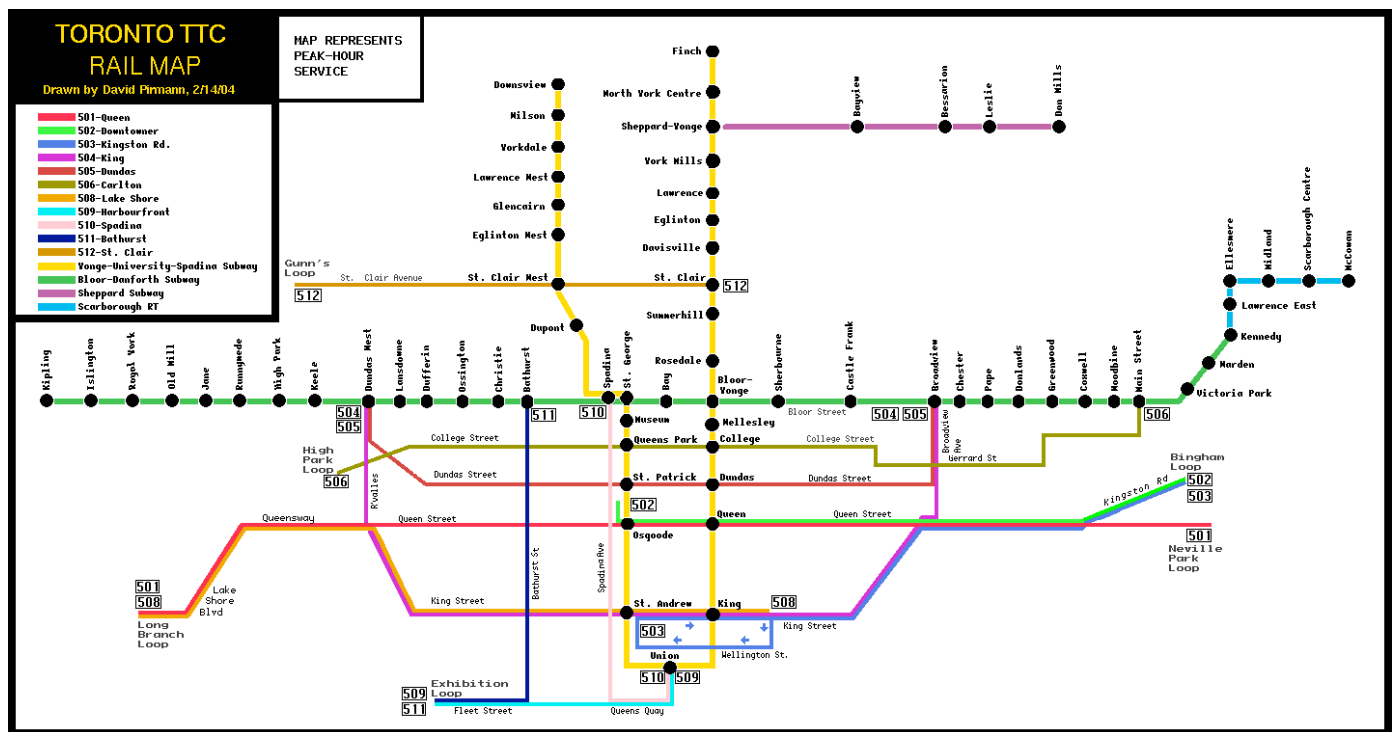
Visiting railfans who are sampling various TTC operations will want to obtain a **Day Pass** for \$9. The TTC publishes a printed *Ride Guide* that is recommended for planning excursions; it's free and available at most subway stations.



<http://www3.ttc.ca/index.jsp>

Extensive information on the TTC and GO transit systems and their histories are available at the **Transit Toronto** website

<http://transit.toronto.on.ca/index.shtml>



Train Shows

There are not nearly as many train shows in Toronto as there used to be in the 1980s. The annual CRHA train show in March was once the largest such event in Canada and has now disappeared, a victim of declining attendance and steep rents.

- The annual **Christmas Train Show** at the International Centre is now the largest train show in town. It is usually held over a weekend in November.

<http://www.antiquetoys.ca/index.html>

- The **Lakeshore Model Railroad Club Flea Market** is held twice a year at Humber College on the first Sunday of April and the first Sunday after Labour Day.

There are many more train shows held in the area surrounding Toronto and the GTA where venues can be rented for a more reasonable cost. There are two websites with information about upcoming shows:

<http://www.boldts.net/TrainsModelShows.shtml>

<http://trainshows.blogspot.com/>



Bicycle Trails

Toronto's extensive ravine system has made it possible to build a large network of bicycle trails, some of which are of interest to railfans.

- The **Belt Line Trail** follows the route of the old Toronto Belt Line, a commuter operation that ran in the 1890s. One can follow almost the entire route of the Yonge St. Loop between the CN Newmarket Sub. in the west, through Fairbank, Forest Hill, Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, to Rosedale in the Don Valley.
- The **Lower Don Trail** parallels the south end of CN's Bala Sub where it branches off from the Kingston Sub. near the Don River. The trail runs as close to the tracks as one can get to a moving train without risking your life or being arrested for trespassing.
- A group called Friends of the **West Toronto Railpath** are advocating for a new bicycle trail along the rail corridor from West Toronto to downtown.



[west toronto railpath](#)

The City of Toronto publishes the annual Toronto Cycling Map, which available for free at municipal venues and shows all the trails in the city as well as rail lines and streets. An online version is available at:

[City of Toronto: Toronto Cycling map](#)

Internet

The best way to keep up to date with railfan happenings in Toronto is through the Internet. The News & Events section of the TRHA website is regularly updated, sometimes daily:

[TRHA News & Events](#)

YAHOO! GROUPS

There are two Yahoo groups of specific interest. Joining either of them requires approval from the moderator for each group:

The **TRHA** group is restricted to members of the Toronto Railway Historical Association or those who can convince the moderator that they have a constructive interest in the organization:

<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/TRHA/>

The **Toronto Railway Heritage** group features daily postings and discussions about Toronto Railway history.

<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/ToRyHeritage/>

Raymond Kennedy's **Old Time Trains** website provides a wealth of information about the history of railways in Toronto, particularly the Canadian Pacific Railway. Accessing the site does not require approval and it is frequently updated:

<http://www.trainweb.org/oldtimetrains/whatsnew.html>



Publications

Although entire volumes have been devoted to picturesque branch lines with a half dozen locomotives, there are relatively few books on Canada's cities and their relationships with the railways.

- A bibliography of historical books is available at the TRHA website:

<http://www.trha.ca/bibliography.html>

- Many of the books listed are out of print but can be obtained through the Toronto Public Library:

<http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/>

- Ian Wilson has published eight books on CN steam in southern Ontario. Although none of the books are specifically about Toronto, most feature trains to and from the city:

<http://www.canadianbranchline.com/>

- The bible for Canadian Railfans is the *Canadian Trackside Guide* published annually by the Bytown Railway Society. Bytown's monthly periodical *Branchline* is Canada's leading publication of railway news of interest to Railfans. Both publications are available at any hobby shop.

<http://www.bytownrailwaysociety.ca/>





This circa-1960 map of the Toronto area was published by the Canadian Freight Association. Canadian National lines are indicated in blue and Canadian Pacific in red. Abandonments since then include:

1. The CN line below Davisville (?) was a remnant of the Toronto Belt Line.
 2. The CN line connecting Oriole and Leaside.
 3. The CN line in the upper left through Caledon.
 4. CP industrial spurs in Scarborough.
- The CP line north of Streetsville is now the Orangeville Brampton Railway.
 - The CN line shown as under construction is now the York Subdivision.

The information in this document was compiled by Derek Boles, TRHA Historian, and the opinions therein do not necessarily reflect TRHA nor TRHC policy.