

Public transit TROUT moves under BCT



From left, Bancroft's new public transit team includes BCT director of operations Gwen Coish, bus drivers Paul Prentice and Jim Spence and owner of R&L Bus Lines Laurie Evans.

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By Sarah Sobanski

Bancroft Community Transit is taking over TROUT operations as the Community Care North Hastings charity dissolves.

BCT is taking the public transit service's gas tax funding and partnering with R&L Bus Lines to keep it running. The charity dissolved as of July 31.

"For those using the bus nothing is going to change. It will look a little different with BCT's logo on the side, and it will go by the name Community Transit," said director of operations for BCT Gwen Coish. "Nothing is changing at this point in regards to current routes and days of service."

Community Transit has a history with CCNH. When the charity branch was part of the popular seniors' programming organization back in 2010, CCNH and BCT met to discuss starting a public transportation system. At the time, they didn't have the same vision, said Coish. CCNH went on to develop the TROUT as people know it today.

Fast forward a few years and CEO for the CCNH charity branch Heather Inwood-Montrose comes onto the scene. She sat down with Coish to discuss BCT's previous vision for the TROUT.

"She said what we had proposed several years ago made sense [and asked] would we be willing to come back to the table to discuss it? We said yes, it's certainly something we're willing to listen and work together [on]," said Coish.

Both organizations got busy, however, and it wasn't until the charity was now separate from CARE North Hastings, two entities formed out of Community Care North Hastings was set to dissolve that Inwood-Montrose approached Coish again.

Now BCT had to decide if it wanted to take on the full responsibility of the TROUT without a partnership with the charity.

"There was a risk that public transit wouldn't be able to be offered here in this community," said Coish. "At that point it became, we're going to do this or we're not going to do this and we need to figure out what our intentions are and how it would work."

That's when Laurie Evans, owner of R&L Bus Lines who operates the TROUT buses, offered to maintain and operate the buses for BCT.

"I myself have been on the bus to see the passengers that we're providing transportation for? they're using the public transportation because they need it," said Evans. "My feelings of what BCT has done? made the transition very easy and that the public transit service in Bancroft is going to be able to continue."

R&L Bus Lines partnered with the charity a little more than a year ago. The charity was finding owning and operating its own buses was too much for it to do all on its own, he said. Evans bought TROUT's three buses and continued to work with the charity to run the service.

"Since then, R&L has purchased a brand new bus in the spring of last year. We've updated the equipment considerably and we will

continue to update the equipment as long as we continue to have a good working relationship with BCT which I think is going to be an awesome working relationship," he said.

Both Coish and Evans are hopeful about their new partnership and look forward to the future of public transit under BCT's leadership. Both said they'd like to maintain the same level of service that has been provided by CCNH. They also want to see it expand once operating the service becomes more routine for BCT.

The only changes public transit commuters are likely to notice are new decals sporting BCT logos. The number for the service remains the same with the addition of BCT's contact number. Reach the bus driver cell at 613-332-8735 or call BCT at 613-332-2732. The bus schedule also remains the same. TROUT clients will be contacted by BCT to register under public transit's new owners, according to the TROUT website.

Coish and Evans wanted to express their gratitude to Inwood-Montrose for helping them make the transition to assume the TROUT and for all her hard work.