



Free bus gives seniors freedom, convenience

[Tiffany Kwong](#) / Surrey Now

July 9, 2013 01:00 AM



Isabelle Mahon, 87, stopped driving about three years ago. "Having this bus is very nice," she said. Photograph by: Luiz Lopes

Isabelle Mahon, 87, stopped driving about three years ago. "Having this bus is very nice," she said. Photograph by: Luiz Lopes

A new bus for North Delta seniors started service at the end of April and, according to its passengers, has been a much-needed addition.

Clive Bray, 76, uses the new seniors' bus to go to and from Kennedy Seniors Recreation Centre in North Delta where he volunteers twice a week. He said he used to drive himself to the centre but drives less now.

"I'm restricted physically now," he said, motioning to his cane. "Until recently, I drove myself over (to the centre) but now I take advantage of the free bus. It's very convenient."

The North Delta Seniors' Bus is a 16-seat shuttle bus that has the capacity to accommodate walkers as well as two wheelchairs, and is equipped with an automatic lift. It is based at the centre and operates from 9: 30 a.m. to 3: 30 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays at no cost to the rider.

However, seniors have to be a resident of North Delta to be eligible for the service, and the bus only travels within North Delta.

"We do make exceptions and go to Surrey Memorial Hospital or if there's a doctor's appointment that's on the border (of Surrey and North Delta)," said Liz Gibson, co-ordinator of senior services with the Corporation of Delta.

Marc Colson, the primary driver of the bus, said that recreation centres, grocery stores and medical appointments are frequent destinations, plus the occasional trip across Scott Road into Surrey.

Colson told the Now what a typical day for him is like.

"I start the day, get there at 9 o'clock, do the prep work, make sure all the bookings are in order, plan my route, go outside and pre-check the bus to make sure it's safe and ready to go and make my first trip," he said.

"We're dealing with a lot of seniors who need a bit of assistance, so I show up at someone's house and assist them on the bus, get the seatbelt on and... take them to their destination, get them off the bus and away they go."

Colson said he makes from three to as many as eight trips in the mornings, which are usually single-passenger rides. He said an effort is being made to co-ordinate more group trips, but at present, some riders can't book the rides they want.

"I just started (taking this bus) last week," said 81-year-old Barbara Cote, who takes the bus from her home to Sungod Recreation Centre for her aquasize classes.

"I'd like to get it every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but it's hard because other people need the bus too - it's hard to book ahead."

Bookings can be made by telephone (604 353-6305) with 48 hours notice, with some flexibility, Gibson said.

"If we have someone who calls, you know, an hour away and if we have space, we certainly try to accommodate (them)," she said. "We're working towards maximizing our trips."

Since the bus began operations two months ago, ridership has been steadily increasing, according to Gibson.

"It's picking up more and more to a point where we increased from three to four days last week," she said.

"It's very obvious, looking at how successful we've been, that the need is there, and I think we're going to make every effort to be able to continue to offer this service to seniors, (which) is definitely a growing demographic."

The North Delta Seniors' Bus, a pilot project for the municipality, is based on the North Shore Seniors Go Bus Program in North Vancouver; it will be assessed after one year. It is funded by an Age-Friendly Grant from the provincial government and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' seniors' housing and support initiative.

Now contributor Twitter @kxiaohua

© Copyright 2013

**ew & Used
Materials**

**Western Canada's largest
architectural salvage yard**

[OPEN ▶](#)