

Codiac Transpo wants to improve service

■ Riverview residents offer suggestions for change; transit service says it is open to all ideas

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There was a healthy dose of irony pointed out at the Town of Riverview's public transit consultation held earlier this week.

The meeting—the first of two aimed at seeking the public's input into Codiac Transpo service in Riverview—was held at Riverview Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday night.

The irony is that some people who wanted to attend the meeting couldn't—they'd have no way to get home because there is no evening bus service in Riverview, Monday through Wednesday.

"Unfortunately that didn't come

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Codiac Transpo holds meetings to discuss improved service in Riverview

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to light until it was too late," Meghan Walsh, communications co-ordinator for the town, admitted this week.

The lack of evening service early in the week was just one of the gaps pointed out by Codiac Transpo users recently, many of whom are call centre workers who work in the old Riverview Mall. Scops of those workers, who live in Moncton or Dieppe, have to walk home each night from their jobs or pay for a cab.

One call centre worker moved to Riverview nearly a decade ago because she grew tired of waking from work to house to Moncton most nights.

Riverview council recently approved a full review of the transit service's operations in the town, and council is hoping the public takes the opportunity to weigh in. A public survey is available at town hall, 30 Honour House Court, or online at townofriverview.ca. The town wants to hear from both those who use the transit system and those who don't.

A second public consultation with Codiac Transpo officials and town councillors and staff takes place this coming Tuesday, again from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at town hall.

Walsh said it is too late to move the session to Thursday or Friday night, when bus service is available, but Codiac Transpo has offered to host smaller sessions with certain specific groups with an interest in public transit, including call centre workers and seniors, in the coming weeks.

Walsh said at its peak, last Tuesday's meeting only saw about 20 people in council chambers talking about public transit. However, several interesting ideas were tossed about.

Walsh said ultimately Riverview residents

want buses coming and going with greater frequency. They want more service early in the day and in evenings.

"You want to be able to grab a bus whenever you need," she said.

Revamping the service in Riverview will require some creativity—the town has only two regular buses, along with an express route that runs during peak hours Monday through Friday.

"A lot of residents don't realize that we only have two (regular) buses for the Town of Riverview," she said. "That's not likely to change due to budgetary constraints."

But residents appear willing to compromise. Some suggested that they don't want any more "scenic routes" and that buses should stick to main arteries in town. That will mean more walking for those who live deep in some neighbourhoods, but Walsh said those who attended the consultation said they would be willing to walk up to a half-kilometre (about a third of a mile) to grab a bus.

"People seem to want more frequency rather than door-to-door service," Walsh said.

And while bus riders want to reduce the number of transfers they need to take, some at the consultation liked the idea of having a transfer point at the Chocolate River Station on Coverdale Road.

Currently, someone coming from one end of town actually has to transfer at Highfield Square in Moncton before they can make it to the opposite end of Riverview.

Carole Moray, general manager of Parkland Riverview, the seniors complex that includes Royal Court, went to Tuesday's session on behalf of residents.

Moray said Codiac Transpo only comes to the complex in the far west of town once a week, on Fridays, and there is no return



Codiac Transpo has held a series of public meetings to try to improve service. Marie-Chair Pierce, senior transit planner, addresses a meeting in Riverview. See more photos online at timetranscript.com

trip. She said there are about 100 residents of Parkland who are physically able to use public transit.

"The residents would really love to have the freedom to know when the buses are coming to take them out (wherever they need to go)," she said.

Moray pitched the idea of the transit service offering short trips once a week from the seniors complex to grocery stores, Champaign Place or other locations.

Riverview resident Rose LeBlanc didn't make it out to Tuesday's session, but she did fill out the town's online survey.

LeBlanc's 16-year-old son Zach takes the bus to his part-time job on Trinity Drive in Moncton in the summer—a trip that takes him more than two hours.

"That's because we're in Riverview and there's not a lot of buses in Riverview," LeBlanc said.

She understands that with limited users, investing in public transit is difficult to do, but she would like to see more routes through Riverview and increased frequency of trips.

Moray is happy to report that Codiac Transpo officials seem open to any and all suggestions.

Marie-Chair Pierce, senior transit planner for Codiac Transpo, confirmed that they are open to all ideas.

"We're very conscious of our customer base, and we continue, we feel, to offer a service that is fair and economically feasible to

the customer," she said.

In recent years, both Moncton and Dieppe have examined the transit service through public consultations.

Pierce said various route changes were made after Moncton's Dillon Report was plotted in 2008 and the service is still trying its route lines in some areas. Some routes have dropped from 50 minutes to 36 and 15 minutes during peak hours.

The service is also piloting the use of accessible buses, though it should be noted that all three Metro municipalities also have accessible transit service providers available to those who require it.

By the end of 2012, there will be an expansion of the express service to Casino New Brunswick in the north end of Moncton; enhancements to service in the Ayr Ave, Elmwood Drive and Lewisville areas.

Luc Richard, director of corporate affairs for Dieppe, said Codiac Transpo made no changes and added Sunday service follows Dieppe's public consultations in 2009.

The city, which has added a third bus to its fleet as well, which was a "major improvement" he said.

Richard said the challenge is increasing the frequency of bus trips.

Changes are still coming to slowly but surely improve the service, he said.

While the service is still frustrating for many, Bridgette Donovan said "it's come a long way" since she moved to Moncton in Alberta in 1989.

Buses now travel later in evenings in an area where there is weekend service that didn't exist only a few years ago.

She travels to work regularly from the Mountain Road/Killam Drive area to downtown Moncton, and she said the express route can take her drastically improved bus quickly she gets around.

However, she would like to see holiday service added.

"There are still people that need to get around on holidays," she said.

Donovan had great things to say about Codiac's drivers too. She said one driver recently looped around a neighbourhood to return to a particular stop because a snow bank hit him from initially seeing someone who was waiting for the bus. The driver didn't want the passenger to have to wait in the cold if he lost the bus. "I was quite amazed by that," Donovan said.

■ Riverview's second Codiac Transpo consultation takes place Tuesday, from 6:30-8:30 p.m., at Riverview Town Hall, Honour House Court. A survey is available at town hall or you can do the survey online at townofriverview.ca. The town encourages feedback from both those who use Codiac Transpo and those who don't.

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