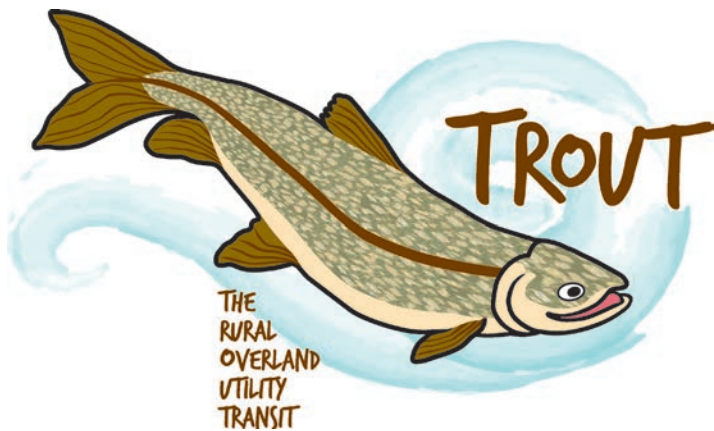


The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT)

**ACCELERATING RURAL
TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS**



Information for this case study was provided by
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A. Overview of Transportation Initiative

The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT) service was launched on May 3rd, 2010 after expanding an existing 'handi-bus' service for seniors so as to provide broader public transit for those within and around the town of Bancroft. The TROUT offers a combined fixed route and specialized service as an efficient and effective model of operation for the area. There are four community buses, which all accommodate wheelchairs, travelling on three out-of-town routes and one within town. Each of the out-of-town routes runs one day per week, while the Bancroft route runs daily. The TROUT's current owner and operator, Community Care North Hastings (CCNH), believes that collective operation of the public transit service by a local Transit Commission will make it more feasible and sustainable in the long term.

B. Community Profile

Location

Located in Central Eastern Ontario, about 2.5 hours west of Ottawa and a half-hour south of Algonquin Park, Bancroft is the town centre from which The Rural Overland Utility Transit (TROUT) operates. Covering approximately 3,380 square kilometres, the TROUT provides service to eight municipalities including the: Town of Bancroft, Municipality of Highlands East, Carlow Mayo Township, Township of Faraday, Municipality of Hastings Highlands, Township of Tudor and Cashel, Township of Limerick, and Wollaston Township. Seven of the municipalities are located in Hastings County and what is known as North Hastings. One of the municipalities, Highlands East, is located in Haliburton County.¹

Demographics/Density

Each of the eight municipalities served by the TROUT has small villages or towns, with the exception of Faraday. The overall population density of the area is 4.5 per square kilometre, ranging from 1.3 per square kilometre to 16.9 per square kilometre.² The total population for the area is 15,303, and the median age is 52, which is higher than the provincial average.³ North Hastings and Highlands East both have a large number of seasonal residents with almost half as many private dwellings occupied full time as the rest of the province.⁴

Political and Governance Structures

The Town of Bancroft, Carlow Mayo Township, Township of Faraday, Municipality of Hastings Highlands, Township of Tudor and Cashel, Township of Limerick, and Wollaston Township are all single-tier governments within the second tier of Hastings County. The Municipality of Highlands East is a single-tier government which is part of the upper tier of Haliburton County.

¹ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 17.

² Ibid.

³ Statistics Canada 2012. Census Profile 2011.

⁴ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 20.

Economy

The area was first settled for its mining, forestry/lumber and farming, but the main industry today is tourism. The number of tourists and repeat seasonal residents to the area has a high level of influence on the local economy, infrastructure and services.⁵ With many lakes, forests, rolling hills and interesting rock outcroppings, the area is known for its breathtaking natural landscape, as well as its adventure, recreation and leisure opportunities. The presence of the Canadian Shield and other geological structures draws many with an interest in collecting rocks and mineral specimens, and has earned the town of Bancroft the title of “the mineral capital of Canada.”⁶

Major Travel Destinations

The various villages and hamlets within North Hastings and Highlands East are spread around in a wheel and spoke formation, with roads connecting them to Bancroft as the hub. The town of Bancroft is a central spot for conducting commerce, accessing goods and services (such as medical and dental), and attending a variety of social and cultural events. While the population of the town is only 3,880, it also serves the populations of North Hastings, Highlands East and beyond.⁷ Bancroft is the main destination in the area, as any other and larger commercial destinations are approximately 1.5 hours away by car or bus.⁸

Local Transportation Context

Access to transportation has been a long-standing issue in North Hastings and Highlands East. Prior to the establishment of the TROUT, there was no fully ‘public’ transit system within the area (i.e., open to everyone). The nearly 3,500 square kilometres of what is sometimes



rugged rural terrain in the area create a particular challenge to operating a public transit service. For instance, “the abundance of gravel roads present major repair and maintenance challenges as these roads are typically much harder on vehicles.”⁹ In addition to maintenance and repair issues, the local geography adds both time and expense to the overall operation of a service compared to that in more urban communities.

Currently, there are two taxi services that are based out of Bancroft. A Greyhound bus service runs twice a week from Peterborough through Bancroft and onto Pembroke, and Foley Bus Lines provides service between Bancroft and Belleville on Fridays. There are also two local school bus lines that offer private charters. As well, three non-profit agencies provide specialized volunteer driver transportation services to their clients (Community Care North Hastings, Bancroft Community Transit and the Canadian Cancer Society).¹⁰

⁵ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 20.

⁶ Wikipedia: The free encyclopedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bancroft,_Ontario; accessed April 18, 2014.

⁷ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 22.

⁸ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 33.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Information provided by John Keith in the survey for the Environmental Scan.

C. Background

Previous Public Transportation Initiatives

Community Care North Hastings (CCNH) first started a “handi-bus” service for their clients in 1989. It provided transportation services for seniors and the physically challenged within the communities of North Hastings and Highlands East. It was organized as a form of ‘specialized’ transportation where individuals would call into CCNH in advance to book a ride. Each day of the week, the bus visited a different area of the region to pick up riders so that they could attend medical appointments, buy groceries and conduct errands in the Town of Bancroft. The approach was similar to what the TROUT travels today. Tuesdays were scheduled for residents of Hastings Highlands; on Wednesdays the bus visited the Coe Hill, St. Ola and Gilmour/Gunter areas; on Thursdays it was in greater Bancroft (including Bird’s Creek); and Fridays were scheduled for Faraday, Cardiff and McArthur Mills. On Mondays, weekly trips were made to out-of-town locations to conduct activities unavailable in Bancroft, such as visits to museums and art galleries, and for excursions to special events, such as viewing the fall colours and attending Christmas celebrations.¹¹

Background of Current Initiative

For some time, CCNH used only its charitable dollars to subsidize the handi-bus. However, providing this service was a substantial drain on the overall financial resources of the organization. As a result of discussions with the local Provincial Member of Parliament, CCNH decided to pursue the gas tax rebate for public transportation from the Province of Ontario. Given Provincial policies related to transportation and access to the Gas Tax Rebate, this decision also provided an opportunity to more actively engage with local municipalities.¹²



In 2008, CCNH organized meetings with each of the local municipal councils requesting resolutions for financial support based on a contribution formula that was developed. Discussions were also held with the County of Hastings and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation. “The County of Hastings stipulated that funds for transportation would be forthcoming only if Bancroft Community Transit and CCNH jointly provided transportation services in North Hastings.” While Bancroft Community Transit also provided a transportation service using volunteers, they did so for a different target population (i.e., those under the age of 55, and primarily [95%] Ontario Works [OW] and Ontario Disability Support Program [ODSP] clients). In the end, both organizations decided that they would continue to provide volunteer transportation services to their respective target groups, and that Community Care North Hastings would invest capital dollars and organizational resources to support the development of a new ‘public’ transit service.¹³

In 2009, public transit licensing was obtained and memberships were established in the Ontario Public Transit Association and the Canadian Urban Transit Association. On May 3, 2010, “The Rural Overland Utility Transit” or TROUT was officially launched as a local public transit service.¹⁴

¹¹ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 8.

¹² Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 9.

¹³ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 10.

¹⁴ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, ps. 10 & 11.



Local Support for Transportation Initiative

Community meetings were organized during the fall of 2009 to gather public opinion, views and input about how a transit service should be organized. All input was considered in the process of developing the routes, schedules and fares for the service. Through initial surveys, 95% of the people surveyed said that they wanted and needed public transit.¹⁵ Community Care North Hastings also initiated a community contest for naming the service. TROUT became the name for the new public transit service given the significance the fish has for the region, as it is one of eight areas in the world that is home to a particular strain of lake trout.¹⁶

Routes, schedules and fare information were distributed as part of an overall awareness and marketing strategy. In response to requests, service to Hastings Highlands was

also established to accommodate both an anticipated need for extra coverage and for individuals wishing to use the service for employment purposes.¹⁷

Overall, local constituents have always been supportive of the transit service. Even those who do not use it have an emotional connection to the idea of providing people in need (such as seniors) with transportation. Such support was made clear during the local campaigns that raised money for buying the buses initially.¹⁸

Initial Funding Sources¹⁹

It took many financial partners and contributors to assist with the development of the TROUT. In the 2010/11 year of operation an application for a gas tax rebate from the provincial government was submitted, and \$84,926 was received. This amount increased to \$104,536 the following year (2011/12). The Town of Bancroft served as the 'host'

¹⁵ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings on May 1, 2014

¹⁶ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 11.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings on May 1, 2014

¹⁹ This entire section came from: Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012 – Chart: “Contributions Supporting the Development of Public Transit”, p. 13.

municipality for the gas tax rebate for all eight of the participating municipalities.

The local Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) made substantial contributions to the establishment of the public transit service in the first two years (\$50,000/yr). In the first year of operation (2010), the Town of Bancroft and the municipalities of Highlands East and Hastings Highlands made significant contributions as well (\$10,000, \$10,057 and \$8,153 respectively). In the second and third years of operation (2011 & 2012), all of those contributions decreased to \$7,759, \$6,057 and \$2,153 respectively, with the CFDC providing \$12,500 in the third year. The reasons for these reductions were considered to be 'political'²⁰ and are further explored in the "Challenges" section below.

Initial start-up funds were also provided by Community Care North Hastings in 2010: \$78,000 for capital expenses and \$26,452 for operational expenses. CCNH's level of funding contribution has continued over the last three years and ranged from \$70,000 to \$75,000 per year.

D. Current Operations

Community Care North Hastings presently owns and operates the TROUT. The TROUT public service consists of four community buses, employs five part-time/casual drivers, and makes 9,000 trips annually. While the TROUT is open to everyone in the community, about 70% of riders are older adults (i.e., 55 years of age and older).²¹

Routes, Schedules and Ridership²²

The TROUT employs a four-part public transit service mix to meet local demographic needs and geographic challenges. It is called a 'Blended Flex Public Transit Service' as it works to empower non-driving residents with greater mobility to access the goods, services, and social and cultural activities that allow them to remain in



the region with independence and dignity. The four parts consist of:

1. Scheduled Regional Routes
2. Door-To-Door Service
3. Individualized Service
4. Special Destinations

This type of approach also provides Community Care North Hastings with a variety of options for increasing ridership and therefore revenues.

1) Scheduled Regional Route Service

The TROUT offers regularly scheduled, fixed bus stop route service throughout the region. A daily route is provided within the town of Bancroft itself as it is the major goods and services area. The transit service then extends out to different parts of the region on specific days of the week, stopping at bus stops along the way to eventually bring riders into Bancroft. Regional pickups are made in the mornings, returning riders to their areas in the afternoon. The daily route service within Bancroft then connects riders from throughout the region to most businesses and all medical centres in the town.

²⁰ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings May 1, 2014.

²¹ John Keith's presentation at the Bancroft Rural Transportation Summit November 15, 2013.

²² This section was based primarily on: 1) Catch the TROUT website, <http://catchthetrout.ca/category/media/>. accessed April 28, 2014; 2) John Keith presentation at Bancroft Rural Transportation Summit, November 15, 2013; and 3) Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014.



2) Door-To-Door Service

Blended into TROUT's regularly scheduled route service is door-to-door service provided to qualified riders who are clients of CCHH (i.e., adults 55 years of age and older, and adults with physical disabilities). The TROUT transit drivers incorporate the door-to-door service pickups into their regular route schedules by picking up riders from their homes, as close as possible to the regular route times and locations.

3) Individualized Service

The TROUT also provides 'individualized' public transit for riders who require wheelchair accessible transportation outside of regularly scheduled route service. Riders use this service for purposes such as attending medical appointments or transportation home from the hospital.

4) Special Destination Service

Further incorporated into the TROUT's public transit service is 'special destination' service. This is offered to facilitate access to local special events, attractions and other destinations outside of regular route and time schedules. This aspect of the service connects riders to social and cultural activities and other destinations of interest that cannot be covered by regular route service. This component of the public transit service is valued as important to helping promote the mental, emotional and spiritual health of riders, thereby contributing to

overall wellbeing. For instance, Sunday bus service to area churches was tried in November 2012 and has become very popular, mainly via word of mouth. As a result, this has become an ongoing special destination public transit initiative.

Other services are also provided through private charters or hires and out-of-town trips. For instance, the TROUT provides busses and drivers as a revenue generator to help support the public transit service and provide an additional service which is appreciated in the community and viewed as vital to partners such as those in the tourism sector. The TROUT is similarly available to groups who wish to hire the service for private transportation to special occasions like weddings, moving large numbers of people and offering a safe and lawful alternative to drinking and driving. They also offer enriching trips to places outside of the area so as to connect residents to other destinations throughout the province (e.g., the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa), with the goal of providing the same kind of access that owners of personal vehicles can enjoy.

The TROUT's Transit Operators are considered to be customer support workers, program coordinators, and customer service experts, as well as professional drivers. TROUT bus drivers are also aware of, and sensitive to, both the social and mental health benefits of interaction and actively encourage, and engage in, conversation and fellowship on the bus with riders as a result.²³

Historically, the service was based on a model involving a single staff person complemented by casual drivers. In June 2010, however, shortly following the launch of the service, a significant change was made to the staffing model to ensure reliability and consistency, and to allow the service to expand. The TROUT chose this part-time employment model after their full-time driver had a heart attack and rapid adaptation was required to continue service. Now, drivers can cover for one another and, as the service expands and increases, the number of driver hours offered can increase as well. This model also enabled the service to consider options such as the planned special

²³ John Keith's presentation at the Bancroft Rural Transportation Summit November 15, 2013; and blog by John Keith on the Catch the Trout website, Trout Public Transit Contribution to Local Sustainability, <http://catchthetrout.ca/trout-public-transit-contribution-to-local-sustainability/>; accessed April 28, 2014.

destination trips and individual requests for charters for events, thereby providing other sources of revenue.²⁴

Over the course of service, ridership has more than doubled – going from 4,500 riders in 2010-2011, the first year of operation, to 9,126 riders in 2013-2014. In the April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 fiscal year alone, demand for the TROUT's service increased by 24% over the previous year. Increases in demand are expected to continue as ridership grows daily and the local population further embraces the advantages offered through public transit.²⁵

Operating Costs and Revenues

While ridership and the popularity of the TROUT continue to grow amongst constituents, current revenues are unable to adequately cover the costs of providing the service. In 2013, the operating expenses associated with the TROUT were in the area of \$180,000, with revenues from various sources at just over \$150,000, leading to a \$30,000 shortfall that year. As a result, CCNH had to make the hard choice of reducing their service level this past year.²⁶

CCNH's contributions along with the provincial gas tax funds provide the majority of revenues, followed by fares, municipal contributions, and then private donations or grants. Only three of the eight municipalities served by the TROUT currently provide financial support for the service, with just one of them providing the full amount that was requested of them by the operators.²⁷

In terms of fares, rides within Bancroft costs \$2.00, with various fees for regional rides costing an average of \$10.00 for a round trip to the far reaches of the catchment area (this also includes unlimited rides once in the town of Bancroft). For instance, between Maynooth, in the Municipality of Hastings Highlands, and Bancroft a one-way fare costs \$8.00 (\$7.00 for seniors and students). A Convenience Pass of 10 rides for \$50.00 is also available, with a cost of only \$5 per ride. In 2012, over \$20,000 was raised through fares and client fees.²⁸

The TROUT also offers display advertising opportunities on and within its buses. This is a chance for local advertisers to profile their businesses on a continuous basis in and on what is essentially 'a billboard on wheels'. Promotional service is sometimes offered free of charge, or at a reduced rate, to promote the TROUT's public transit and other services to riders. For example, promotional service was offered in recent years to connect riders with community activities and events such as Santa Claus parades, luncheon socials, community activities and other local initiatives.²⁹ Revenues from the sale of Special Destination trips and Charters, along with advertising and merchandise, were over \$10,000 in 2012.³⁰

²⁴ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012. Chart: "Contributions Supporting the Development of Public Transit", p. 12.

²⁵ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014; and Report to the News Media, blog by John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services <http://catchthetrout.ca/category/media/>; accessed April 28, 2014.

²⁶ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ John Keith. Blog: "About the TROUT." Catch the TROUT website. <http://catchthetrout.ca/category/media/>; accessed April 28, 2014.

³⁰ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014.

Challenges

The TROUT service is now entering its fifth year of operation but is struggling with funding shortfalls. Unfortunately, direct revenue from provision of the transit service is not enough to cover expenses and, like any other public transit system, it must be subsidized to be sustainable.³¹ The TROUT owners and operators would like to see one third of funding coming from the provincial government through the gas tax program, one third from the different municipalities being served combined, and one third from other revenues such as contributions through Community Care, private donations, and potential grants from the federal government.³² Municipal contributions, however, are not currently at this level.

Many small municipalities operate with extremely tight budget line items and need to address other issues first, such as road maintenance, so they question how they can possibly support public transit as well. Unfortunately, some municipal councils actually want to see a profit or at least direct returns on their investment. Not only is this difficult to demonstrate, but most evidence of the benefits of investment in public transit comes out of the United States, and the TROUT operators are unable to show how an investment of over \$100,000 translates locally into a \$100,000 return. At the TROUT, it is felt that local municipalities need to consider the 'triple' bottom line, as focusing only on the financial line is limiting: maintaining fiscal responsibility while at the same time weakening the social fabric of the community is considered to have negative long-term consequences.³³

As with most rural regions within the province, large catchment areas and sparse populations also make it a

challenge to provide public transit in North Hastings and Highlands East. Another challenge is the current car culture within rural communities. The private automobile has been the main source of transportation in rural Ontario for years and reliance on the car is deeply entrenched. While the introduction of public transit challenges present ways of thinking, it also opens new possibilities, and so it is believed that those who require, use and/or recognize the benefits of the TROUT service need to become more vocal.³⁴

Other challenges being experienced by the TROUT operators include CCNH's history of running the handibus. This causes confusion for people within the region as there is still a perception by some community members that the TROUT is just for seniors, so they continually need to raise awareness that this is not the case. Also, the fact that the TROUT is already established makes it harder to receive financial and other forms of support. For instance, local businesses say things like, "We are supportive," but they do not see any reason to provide financial assistance given the service already exists.³⁵

Finally, as part of the out-of-town special destination trips, the TROUT occasionally meets requests to go shopping in Belleville and then out for lunch. They receive negative feedback from some local businesses as a result. However, they try to point out that this is similar to private car owners who travel to the city and other larger destinations on occasion to purchase goods and services that are not available within Bancroft. Moreover, a local sustainability report, produced in 2011 and further explained in the next section, indicates that access to large urban centres needs to be occasionally provided in order to retain residents in rural areas in the long-term.³⁶

³¹ Ibid.

³² John Keith presentation at Bancroft Rural Transportation Summit, November 15, 2013.

³³ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings on May 1, 2014; and Gord MacDonald and John Keith, TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 51.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ John Keith presentation at Bancroft Rural Transportation Summit November 15, 2013; and interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014.

³⁶ Ibid.

Impacts and Successes

In 2011 the Monieson Centre at Queen's School of Business was contracted by Community Care North Hastings to help evaluate the TROUT system and make recommendations to increase ridership and operational efficiency. The findings of the report included extensive research of existing theories and best practices for both urban and rural public transit development. The study was also designed to provide a practical guide for evaluating the TROUT's existing routes, comparing alternate routes and making decisions for further improvement. The outcome of the analysis showed that the transit system was very well designed and re-affirmed the current routes and schedules, with some recommendations for minor adjustments. The Queen's Report was useful in building credibility within the community as well, as a reputable academic institution was engaged in evaluating the transit system.³⁷

Overall, local feedback received about the transit service conveys that the TROUT has also had many positive impacts on its riders, but most of this has only been gathered anecdotally. Like other community transit services, the TROUT and its owner and operator CCNH do not have the time or resources to measure impacts using more scientific methods.³⁸ To date, they have had to rely on direct quotes from riders, such as those documented in the body and appendices of the TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12.³⁹

In 2011 the Town of Bancroft created a comprehensive report entitled, Sustainable Bancroft: An Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. It stated that Sustainable Bancroft was "about sharing a common purpose: sustaining a community where people thrive and enjoy a

good quality of life," contributing to growth, health, and wellbeing. The report identified transportation as "a core component of a sustainable community". The TROUT owners and operators feel that their public transit service plays a prominent role in sustainability of the region.⁴⁰

From an economic standpoint, the service supports the local economy by connecting riders with goods and services by providing access to 95% of Bancroft's businesses. It also offers access to local jobs, employs its own bus drivers and administration staff, and enriches local businesses through bus maintenance, fuel purchases, media promotions and other expenditures. Environmentally, it is a green alternative to personal vehicle use as it conserves fuel and reduces greenhouse gas and other emissions by transporting groups of people in one vehicle. Socially, public transit facilitates interaction between riders and drivers, as well as others at each of the local destinations. The TROUT also supports the cultural aspects of sustainability by further enabling residents to access cultural events and activities.⁴¹

Community Support

In the summer of 2012, over 5,600 survey postcards were distributed via the postal service to constituents of North Hastings and Highlands East to evaluate the service, provide evidence of its need and help plan for the future. Across all of the municipalities served, 93-97% of respondents rated the service as 'valuable' or 'very valuable'. Also, of the total respondents, 94% indicated a need and continued need for public transit. Another important finding was that there was no significant difference between constituents' responses based on location, such as geography or proximity to services. It

³⁷ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 54.

³⁸ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014.

³⁹ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012.

⁴⁰ Sustainable Bancroft: An Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (2011). www.town.bancroft.on.ca/images/Sustainable/bancroft20icsp20final20may_10_2011.pdf

⁴¹ John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services. Trout Public Transit Contribution to Local Sustainability. Blog., <http://catchthetrout.ca/trout-public-transit-contribution-to-local-sustainability/>; accessed April 28, 2014.

is hoped that these findings will help to inform future decisions about the transit service made by political leaders in each of the municipalities.⁴²

More recently, a group called Advocates for Rural Public Transportation has formed and is made up of supportive municipal councillors as well as others locally who are passionate about the TROUT. This group plans to go to all eight of the municipal councils in the area to discuss the transit system in terms of stimulating the local economy. They see public transit as an economic driver that helps to create employment. It has been shown to improve independence and mobility for individuals accessing educational opportunities, jobs, recreation, health and social services and other activities. A further benefit is that it is open to all, including those most vulnerable, enabling them to live, work, play and spend their money within the community.⁴³

E. Future Considerations

The dispersed, low-density population in this region makes a single fixed route less effective, and a dial-in service more costly. Continuing to provide an integrated conventional and specialized service appears to be the most cost-effective way of delivering public transit to the local population. Although it is not always an easy process to provide their 'blended flex service', the TROUT makes it work as well as they can.⁴⁴

Given the growing number of seniors residing in the area, compounded by an aging demographic overall, the

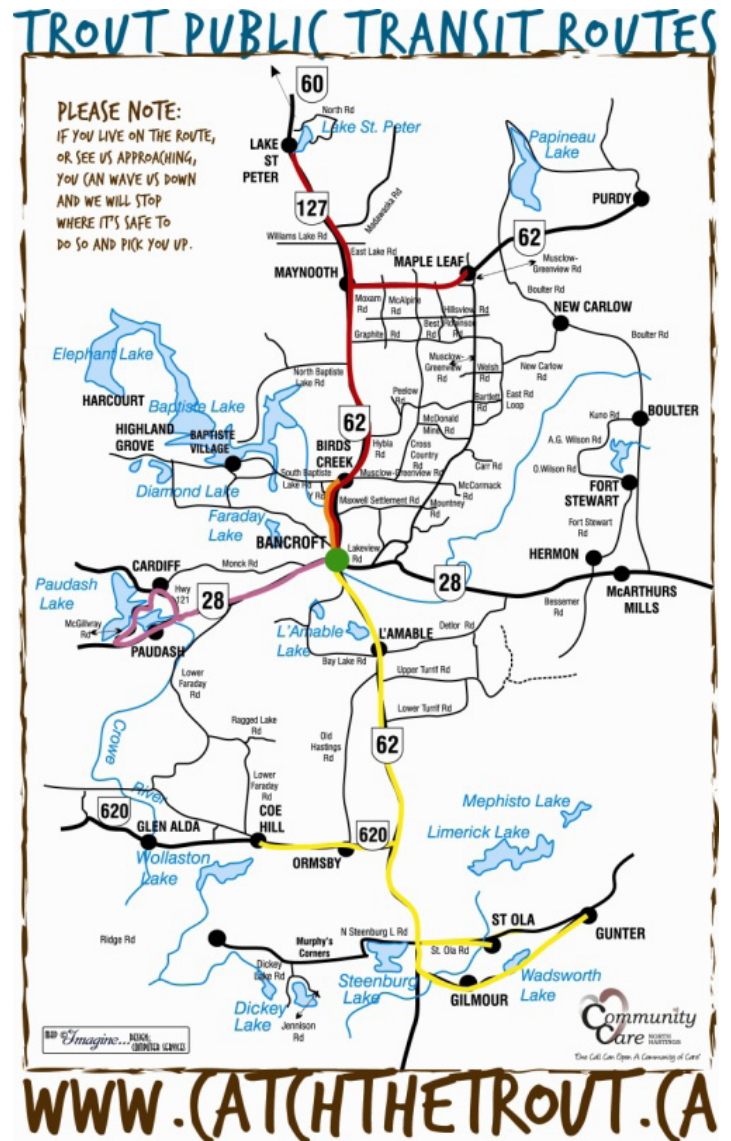


need for affordable, convenient public transit is likely to continue to grow.⁴⁵ As the TROUT develops and evolves, additions and modifications to existing fixed bus stop routes will be necessary to provide more efficient and effective public transit service.⁴⁶ Yet, if increased support does not come from the local municipalities, it is likely that they will have to discontinue service on some days (e.g., the Monday service within Bancroft). To support the service levels provided to date, the TROUT needs to raise an additional \$100,000 per year. The plan is therefore to put more energy into offering chartered trips. However this is less about public transit and more about revenue generation.⁴⁷

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- ⁴² Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, ps. 4, 44, 45.
- ⁴³ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014; and Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 52.
- ⁴⁴ John Keith presentation at Bancroft Rural Transportation Summit, November 15, 2013; and Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 52.
- ⁴⁵ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 32.
- ⁴⁶ Catch the TROUT website; <http://catchthetrout.ca/category/media/>; accessed April 28, 2014.
- ⁴⁷ Interview with John Keith, Manager of Transportation Services, and Gord MacDonald, Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings, May 1, 2014.

Operators of the TROUT would like to see the current organizational structure evolve so that a local Transit Commission would develop to assist in overseeing operations and undertake greater responsibility for the service. This structure would allow for greater input from municipal councils and other vested parties, such as the Chamber of Commerce and individual riders. The model could also enhance the accountability of the municipal councils, and allow for greater ownership of the public transit service from a broader community base. In addition, the model would be better positioned for sustainability because municipal participation and investment would be enhanced through co-ownership.⁴⁸

Gord MacDonald, the current Executive Director of Community Care North Hastings, believes that a Transit Commission “is the way to go so as to provide a long-term sustainable transportation service locally.” He also wonders why, in rural communities, “We all pay for roads, for policing and for schools, but not for public transit.” He sees this issue as one that goes beyond the Bancroft area and being bigger than just the TROUT, and thinks that the province should consider providing assistance to motivate municipalities. For example, incentives could be provided to small, rural communities via a model that would match every dollar from a municipality with one from the province.⁴⁹



⁴⁸ Gord MacDonald and John Keith. TROUT Report to Municipalities 2010-12: Public Transportation in North Hastings and Highlands East Municipalities. Oct. 2012, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Gord MacDonald. Executive Director, Community Care North Hastings. quoted during interview, May 1, 2014.