

Transcollines to offer on-demand transit in the Pontiac

by SOPHIE KULJPER DICKSON

PONTIAC

Apr. 8, 2024

Pontiac residents looking to get around without using their own cars may soon have expanded public transit options at their fingertips.

Transcollines, the organization that runs the route 910 bus line from Allumette Island to Gatineau and back every day, making several stops in the Pontiac along the way, has plans to add on-demand transit services to the mix.

The new service will make it possible for residents to schedule a pickup with a designated bus that will take them to their destination, at their convenience.

"It's going to be much more effective if you

can yourself decide what time you need to travel instead of us forcing you to take the bus at a precise hour," said Transcollines communications manager Chantal Mainville.

Currently the sole 910 bus line in the region makes one trip into the city in the morning, leaving Allumette Island at 5:15 a.m., and makes one trip back out in the evening, leaving Gatineau at 4:30 p.m.

Transcollines plans to transform the segment of the regular 910 bus line between Allumette Island and Campbell's Bay into an on-demand service, meaning pick-up will be available if you schedule it.

The regular fixed bus schedule will resume from Campbell's Bay to Gatineau.

At the same time, a second transit bus will be introduced for on-demand rides anywhere

in the Pontiac region between 5 and 9 a.m., and 3:30 and 8:30 p.m.

The new transit options will become available as soon as Transcollines can secure a second bus for the on-demand services, which could be this spring.

"We're really pushing to be able to launch this thing in the next few months, because the Pontiac has been waiting for a while now," Mainville said.

Successful pilot in des Collines

The on-demand model is one that Transcollines has been piloting in MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais in partnership with local taxi service Taxi Loyal since the fall of 2022.

In this model, public transit users book a ride through an app, at least two hours ahead of time. A taxi comes to pick them up at a designated stop, and delivers them to a stop nearest to their destination.

Sometimes the car may have two or three other people in it, and sometimes the rider may be alone.

Either way, it is more economical and climate friendly than having a full bus drive a fixed bus route if it is not always full.

"It's more efficient to have the small cars instead of having bus lines everywhere on the territory," explained Francis Beausoleil, who is both the chair of the transit organization's board of directors and the councillor for the La Pêche ward of Masham.

He explained that in MRC des Collines, the transit service maintained the bus lines that were well used – those that carried public servants into the city and back out again – but replaced the less used lines with the on-demand service.

"We saw the difference that on-demand transport made in MRC des Collines," Beausoleil said, noting that in his own ward, seniors began using the service to get to the grocery store in Farm Point because there was none in Masham.

"So we could see the same thing here that people from Campbell's Bay could take the on-demand transport to the Giant Tiger in Shawville or the Metro in Fort Coulonge. This is a good thing for the seniors and of course a good thing for students that need to go to the CEGEP or attend activities at high schools after class."

Figuring out what's needed

Beausoleil, who is also the communications advisor for MRC Pontiac and so familiar with the region, says transferring this model to the Pontiac territory would involve addressing a new set of challenges.

He said unlike in des Collines, where large numbers of people are travelling into the city every morning and back out in the evening, people move differently across the Pontiac territory.

"It's one thing to go to the city but if you want to stay within the MRC, you're not going to want to wait six to seven hours to catch the bus to bring you back home," Beausoleil said.

"Here in the Pontiac there might be some people from Luskville that work at the Shawville hospital, or people from Shawville that work in Campbell's Bay."

Mainville said that this first phase of expanded public transit services will be used to develop a more detailed portrait of how people actually travel in the region, and that additional fixed bus lines might be added down the road if the on-demand service demonstrates there to be a need.

"Eventually we would like to bring smaller vehicles to be able to go in the villages, but that would be phase two because there's more work to do there for the supply," she added, referring to the lack of taxi services in the region.

Mainville said the MRC Pontiac had already contributed its annual share of \$162,660 for this service, and the Municipality of Pontiac \$81,330.

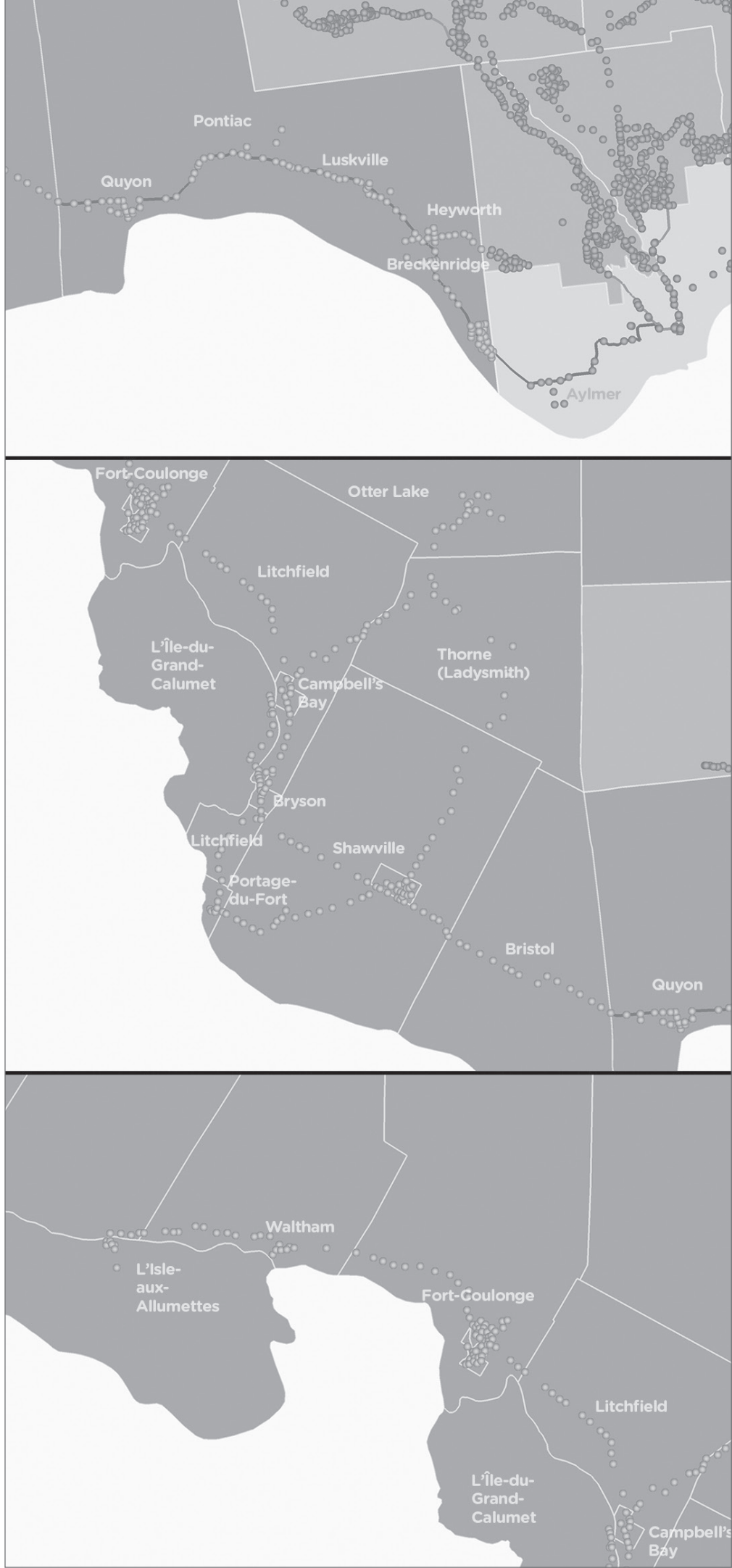


Photo: Transcollines

This map shows the proposed stops for the new on-demand public transit service that Transcollines is planning to launch in the Pontiac region in the next few months, once the organization secures a second bus to offer the additional services on top of the fixed bus route already in operation.



Charles Dickson, THE EQUITY

The second Black Tie Gala hosted by the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce took place beneath the 10 chandeliers of the grand salon at the Pontiac Conference Centre in Fort Coulonge on Saturday evening, where venue owner Jane Toller is seen here chatting with C of C board member Lisa Boisvert.

Chamber's gala a fun evening for Pontiac business community



Charles Dickson, THE EQUITY

The Board of Directors of the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce are (left to right) Sebastien Bonnerot (president), Patrick Lasalle, Ronald MacKillop, Trefor Munn-Venn, Lisa Boisvert, Todd Hoffman, Mireille Alary, Dr. Isabelle Gagnon and Michel Denault. Absent was Rhonda Morrison.

by CHARLES DICKSON
FORT COULONGE

Apr. 6, 2024

An evening of networking, celebration, good food and good humour was the scene on Saturday when Pontiac's business community turned out for the second black tie gala hosted by the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce at the Pontiac Conference Centre in Fort Coulonge.

The evening consisted of a welcoming speech by chamber president Sebastien Bonnerot, comments by Pontiac MP Sophie Chatel, a celebration of François Carrier on the occasion of his departure as general manager of CHIP FM, entertainment by stand-up comic and the evening's emcee Eric O'Brien, and a silent auction of gifts donated by chamber members.



Charles Dickson, THE EQUITY

François Carrier was presented with a gift by mayors Christine Francoeur of Fort Coulonge and Sandra Armstrong of Mansfield-Pontefract in celebration of his 12 years as general manager of CHIP FM which he left in late March to take on a new role as general manager and sales manager at Le Droit.



Charles Dickson, THE EQUITY

Eric O'Brien, a real stand-up kind of guy, not only served as emcee of the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce Black Tie Gala on Saturday evening, but provided the gathering of business people from across the Pontiac with some good laughs with his comedy routine, reminding everyone that it helps to have a sense of humour.

Quad Club poker run raises \$1,500 for Bouffe Pontiac

by GUILLAUME LAFLAMME

SHAWVILLE

Apr. 6, 2024

Members of Pontiac's Quad Club spent Saturday chasing down five different playing cards stashed at businesses staggered throughout an almost 200-kilometre loop with the hopes of compiling a winning poker hand.

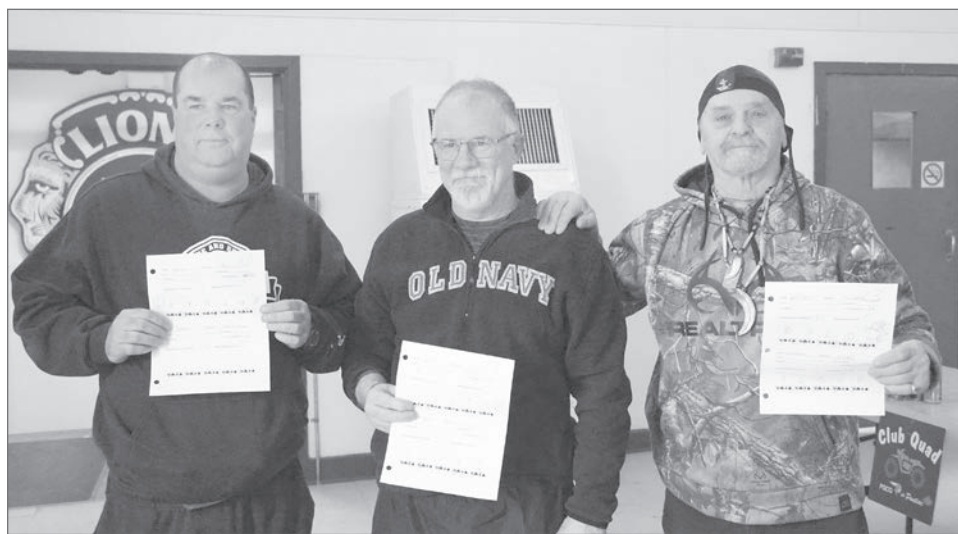
Over 80 all-terrain vehicles, collectively carrying almost 150 people, participated in the fourth annual Big Wow Poker Run. This year's event was a fundraiser for local food bank Bouffe Pontiac.

Diane Barrette, administrator for the quad club and one of the organizers for the event, was happy to see so many people turn out.

"It's the first time we've ever had that many [people]. So it's something that we are very proud of," Barrette said.

The poker run included a 193-kilometre looped trail through part of the Pontiac region which started and ended at the Shawville arena.

While exploring the trail, drivers stopped at four different locations throughout the region



Guillaume Laflamme, THE EQUITY

Winners of the Big Wow Poker Run were, from left, Paul Morin in first place, Terry Young in second place, and Mike "The Pike" Whitlock in third.

to collect a playing card sealed in an envelope. The stops included Dépanneur Marcotte in Quyon, Malivia Restaurant in Wolf Lake, Hotel

Ladysmith, and Scooters Bar and Grill in Otter Lake.

Barrette explained that the stops also served

the purpose of helping the local economy by promoting local businesses.

"We like to put forward all the business and bring them [around] so that they know where the restaurants are, [and] where the gas stations are."

Once all five cards had been collected, including one at the start, the participants returned to the arena where a spaghetti dinner awaited them and where they would open their envelopes, revealing a five-card poker hand.

The first place prize of \$500 was awarded to Paul Morin, who collected a winning hand of four aces and an eight. The \$300 prize for second place went to Terry Young, and Mike "The Pike" Whitlock won the third place prize of \$200.

Morin, who is from Limoges, Ont. said he is probably going to use the money to refill the gas tank of his truck.

The event, which also featured 50/50 draws for dozens of prizes, was a success according to Barrette, who said it raised \$1,500 for Bouffe Pontiac. The money is set to be donated later this week.

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