



Commuters board new "link bus" at Haney Place Monday. Mini-buses are a regional first.

News photos by Simone Ponne

Riders love new buses

By Karin Mark
Staff Reporter

Residents lined up at bus stops Monday to try out Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows' new bus system.

With little fanfare, nine diesel buses and five mini-buses took to the local streets to provide a mix of local, rural and regional service.

Rona Miller, getting off a bus from Vancouver at Haney Place Mall, said she will "never again fight traffic into Vancouver by car."

"The bus is just so convenient. I'd rather use the time sitting in traffic to read than get a headache from stress," the legal secretary said.

The trip took her about 90 minutes, she said, slightly longer than her usual commute but much cheaper when parking is taken into account.

Another resident, Robert Jaffray said: "I think it'll be great for the people who don't have cars, especially the seniors."

Dolores Amado said she thinks transit will help the community, but people who don't use the service shouldn't have to pay in-

creased taxes.

The fanfare came Tuesday morning, when the service was officially sworn in at ceremonies at Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows municipal halls.

About 25 BC Transit, provincial and municipal officials attended the Maple Ridge ceremony, then took a mini-bus to the Pitt Meadows ceremony.

Murray Dykeman, chair of the Vancouver Regional Transit Commission and North Vancouver mayor, said extending transit to the area is another step towards BC Transit's goal of encouraging people to stop using cars.

Maple Ridge mayor Belle Morse agreed: "It's a wonderful thing we have for Maple Ridge and I hope we all use it."

A lot of work went into getting transit to this point, she said, and this council is "just lucky to be the ones to give it the final push."

Pitt Meadows Mayor Bud Tiedeman said the struggle to get transit has been worth it, and the service will bring relief to commuters and be good for the environment.

Local MLA Bill Hartley was quoted as saying: "You're either on the bus or off the bus."

"Hopefully more and more people every

day will be on the bus."

The mayors were presented an oversized plastic key to the Vancouver Regional Transit System.

BC Transit is providing the regional bus service with its nine 40-foot buses. The service takes commuters into Vancouver in about 90 minutes.

Peak hour service takes passengers directly to Vancouver every 15 minutes, the first bus arriving in Vancouver at 8 a.m. Non-peak hour service to Vancouver runs every 30 minutes, and passengers transfer at Coquitlam Centre.

Local and rural service is provided by Independent Bus and Transportation on five Link mini-buses. The service is mainly daytime except for Friday and Saturday evenings.

A dial-a-ride option is available for people in the areas of the Fraser Regional Correctional Centre, Garibaldi neighborhood or Whonnock Lake.

People in those areas are able to telephone an hour before the bus is expected at the nearest stop, and the bus will deviate from its regular route to pick them up or drop them off.