

# BUS HISTORY ASSOCIATION 2017 CONVENTION

Vancouver, BC – Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>

*All photos by Kevin Nicol, unless otherwise indicated*

The Bus History Association held its 2017 annual convention in Vancouver, British Columbia from June 8th to June 10th. This was the first time that the BHA had held its annual convention in the most populous city of British Columbia since 1986. From May to October of that year, the "World Exposition on Transportation and Communication", known simply as Expo 86, was held in Vancouver. The year 1986 also coincided with the opening of the SkyTrain, the elevated rapid transit system of BC Transit.

The host hotel for the convention was the Best Western Plus - Coquitlam Inn. The BHA decided to go out into the suburbs for more reasonable hotel prices and ended up in Coquitlam, east of Burnaby and about 12 miles east of downtown Vancouver. Even though the hotel was in the suburbs, good transit service was a must in choosing a location. In this case, the Lougheed Town Centre SkyTrain Station (served by the Millennium and Expo lines) was only a short ten minute walk from the hotel. Coast Mountain Bus Company had a community shuttle route (utilizing body-on-chassis small buses), C9, which provided convenient direct access to the hotel from the station for the people who could not walk the distance. Three full days of activities were planned for the convention with between 50-55 people attending depending on the day.

## DAY ONE – Thursday, June 8<sup>th</sup>

BHA members were warned ahead of time that Thursday was going to be a very long day. On this day, we would venture by ferry to Vancouver Island. The departure time from the hotel was bright and early at 7:00 AM. We had TMS Classic 4276 for the trip from the hotel to Horseshoe Bay Ferry Terminal in West Vancouver. With only 1 bus and approximately 48 people, it was very crowded resulting in a number of people standing. However, TMS would provide two buses for the return trip home in the evening.

The early morning rain and heavy Vancouver bound traffic put our arrival at Horseshoe Bay in jeopardy but TMS President Dale Laird, who was driving the bus, did manage to get us to the ferry terminal in time for the 8:30 AM departure to Nanaimo. The ferries operated on the Nanaimo and Victoria routes are very large holding approximately 1,500 passengers and 360 vehicles.

Arriving at Departure Bay in Nanaimo after a crossing time of about an hour and forty minutes, a slight rain was falling. As we awaited our charter coach on the island, we were able to get a few shots of Tofino Bus Service Prevost buses. Tofino Bus operates all of the line haul routes on Vancouver Island that were previously operated by Greyhound Canada. Our charter bus eventually showed up and it was a Prevost H3-45 of Wilson's Transportation (*photo at left*). The paint scheme was immediately recognizable as a bus previously owned by American Stage Lines of Martinez, CA. It



is definitely one of the more attractive paint schemes around. Wilson's Transportation kept the scheme and just put on their fleet number and logo.

From the Departure Bay Ferry Terminal, we headed to Prideaux Bus Exchange in Nanaimo. RDN Transit (Regional District of Nanaimo) provides the service in Nanaimo. The Nanaimo fleet is entirely New Flyer XN40 and we stayed at the downtown bus terminal for the 11:05 AM pulse time. Even though it was still raining, people managed to get quite a few shots of the Xcelsior buses.

After Nanaimo, our next stop would be at Village Green Mall in Duncan, BC. Cowichan Valley Transit is still operating Dennis Dart buses (*photo at right*) and they are due to be replaced in the next 1-2 years. Although we did not see any Vicinity buses (the replacement for the Darts), we made it a priority to visit cities that still had the Darts in service as their time was limited.



After Duncan, it was on to Victoria where our first stop was at the Wilson's Transportation garage. Their garage is actually pretty small and with their recent fleet expansion (they successfully bid on the Cruise Ship shuttle contract about a year ago), it was crowded and hard to get good photos. It seems like Wilson's has adopted the "Charter Bus Lines" paint scheme but has blue and white colors, instead of green and white. Their newer fleet is mainly Prevost, but they also operate double-deckers including an Enviro 400 double-decker (seen in downtown Victoria). They also have numerous used buses in their fleet including some MC9 and 102A3 buses. One of the 102A3 buses is obviously ex-Dallas DART based on its yellow paint scheme.



After a quick lunch stop in downtown Victoria, we headed to Ogden Point which is where the cruise ships dock. Wilson's and CVS Tours keep most of their buses down at the Point. CVS Tours (formerly known as Cruise Victoria) also operates Prevost buses used in Cruise ship shuttle services. Also at Ogden Point were the suburban Nova LFS buses used by Cowichan Valley Transit on commuter service between Duncan and Victoria. The LFS buses lay over at Ogden Point in the middle of the day. Finally, while at Ogden Point, Rob Chew, co-convention organizer had arranged for Rick

Norman to bring his restored 1967 GMC TDH-4519 (ex-Victoria Transit # 762) down to their dock (*photo at left*). This bus has the updated EIP package of later models, but is in fact a TDH-4519.

After Ogden Point, we headed down to Government and Superior and spent an hour there photographing many Victoria Transit buses, including the double-deckers on some of the express routes. After a great day on Vancouver Island, it was time to head back to Vancouver.

Upon arrival back in Vancouver at Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal, the TMS Classic was joined by TDH-4519 # 4612 (painted in BC Hydro colors) for the ride back to the hotel. Even though we arrived at the hotel just before 10:00 PM, everyone agreed that it had been a very enjoyable day.

## DAY TWO – Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup>

The Friday of the BHA convention stayed in the greater Vancouver area. Initially, this day was planned for the Saturday of the BHA convention but at the request of Coast Mountain Bus Company, the BHA had to switch our Friday and Saturday activities with less than a month before the convention.

Our buses for the day were provided by TMS and they were the same two buses (4612 and 4276) that we had the night before coming back from the Ferry Terminal. Our first stop was at the Hamilton Transit Center in Richmond, the newest bus garage for the Coast Mountain Bus Company. The HTC had just opened in September 2016 and our tour of the garage highlighted the numerous technology and environmental innovations that are featured in the garage. For example, in the fuelling line, WiFi communication knows what type of fuel (diesel, low-sulphur diesel or CNG) is required for the bus even before the maintenance personnel hook up the fuel lines. It was actually a very impressive tour and a very impressive garage.

In terms of vehicles, all of the vehicle parking is outside due to the warmer year round climate of the Vancouver area. This allowed for some photos of the buses lined up at the garage (*photo at left, a New Flyer XN40 at the Hamilton Transit Centre*). They even had a few "dead" rows at the garage where we were able to get photos of buses that had been recently withdrawn from service.



After the HTC, our next stop was at the Roseberry Storage Facility of the Transit Museum Society (TMS). Recent years have seen TMS lose their storage facilities at CMBC garages. As a result, the Roseberry facility is now very overcrowded. With the facility very small to begin with, there really is not much room available for more equipment. It even makes getting equipment out of the garage a hard task as some vehicles literally are inches away from other vehicles. Because of this, only one vehicle was outside for our group to photograph. Canadian Car Brill CD-52, ex-BC Hydro # 3405, was parked outside. All of the rest of the buses had to be photographed inside. One vehicle of interest was the ex-Edmonton BBC trolley # 132. This bus has actually never operated under the wires on the streets of Vancouver and only briefly ran under the wires at the old Oakridge trolley bus facility.

While TMS still has their diesel buses available for charter (they can only licence 2 at a time, which is why the BHA had the same buses on the two days), the trolley buses have not seen the road in approximately two years. TMS was hoping to get them on the road for Canada 150 celebrations this year but so far no events are planned. The problem is that current management at CMBC does not want the liability should TMS trolleys pull down wires while on the road. The current management is slightly better than the old management but the relationship is still strained. Hopefully, it will be mended in the future because it was

too bad that the BHA did not get to charter the trolleys. It really is a treat riding on an old Brill trolley down the streets of downtown Vancouver. While at the TRAMS facility, the BHA took a group photo in front of our two charter buses for the day (*photo below*).



From the TMS storage facility, our next stop was at Universal Coach Lines. Universal has a varied fleet of Prevost, MCI and Setra coaches. It started to rain while we were at Universal and they were pretty strict about only allowing a few people at a time in their yard to take pictures. Thus, our visit took longer than anticipated. At this point, we contacted CMBC regarding our scheduled time at the Vancouver Transit Centre and they asked if we could come earlier than scheduled. Lunch was pushed back later and we headed directly to VTC from Universal.

The visit to VTC was very interesting. It is always nice to visit a facility that operates trolley coaches which allowed for quite a few photos of the E40LFR and E60LFR coaches in the yard. We were also able to get a photo of CMBC 1007, a BYD electric bus that is currently undergoing testing (*photo below left*).



It had not been in service yet during our visit but it has since entered service. CMBC is also planning on testing a Nova and New Flyer electric bus to determine possible orders for the future.

With the earlier visit to VTC, we had to have a later lunch. On the suggestion of our TMS drivers, we stopped at the Oakridge Centre. This also allowed for some CMBC shots (on Cambie) and a few intercity coaches (Traxx and International Stage Lines) that went by during our lunch stop.

After lunch we headed to downtown Vancouver. Some people elected to stay downtown. After a short stop at the Waterfront Skytrain station, we headed back to the hotel. Our TMS drivers took us on a very scenic tour along the way which was appreciated by the BHA members who were visiting Vancouver for the first time.

It was an early finish at the hotel which allowed sufficient time to get ready for the BHA annual meeting and the magnificent slide presentation of former CCF Brill trolley coach driver Angus McIntyre.

## DAY THREE – Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>

The Saturday of the BHA convention would be spent taking the "Sea to Sky" Highway north and west of Vancouver. Our charter bus for the day was an MCI 102DL3 All Points Bus of Chilliwack, BC. We had originally wanted to charter Dale Laird's Prevost LeMirage XL but when our attendance went above 48, a 45' vehicle was needed. Dale was able to find a bus from a local contact person.



Our first stop of the day was in West Vancouver at the garage of West Vancouver Municipal Transit. This is one of the more unique operating systems around. They have a long history having celebrated their 100th anniversary on 2012. Many of the buses still carry the special anniversary logo (photo attached). The West Van buses always have the unique housing on the front of the roof that displays the City crest. On the Saturday we were there, quite a few buses were present in the garage so we were able to get quite a few photos. Included was one of their newest XD40 buses, number 1602. However, the

highlight of the visit was being able to see the beautifully restored historical bus of WVMT. Bus # 61, is a 1961 TDH-4517 (*photo above*) and was actually the first GMC New Look put into service in the greater Vancouver area. It is kept in great shape and had just received a new coat of paint last year after unfortunately being vandalized. As can be seen from the photos though, it looks great now.

Our next stop would be in Squamish, 60 kilometres from West Vancouver. We took the "Sea to Sky" highway # 99 which provides dramatic mountain scenery as you climb up in elevation. This roadway now is 4 lanes most of the way to Whistler. Prior to the Winter Olympics in 2010, it was a winding two lane highway that had a reputation for being a very dangerous stretch of road. Even though it is four lanes now, you still get drivers who drive like idiots. Unfortunately, there is no alternative as we found out when we were stopped dead on the



highway for just under an hour just outside of Lions Bay. Some young idiot in a BMW SUV thought he could take corners a lot faster than reality. The overturned car, subsequent fire and ambulances delayed us getting to Squamish. The service for Squamish Transit on a Saturday is minimal and our later arrival allowed us only to see 2 Dennis Dart buses (*photo above right*), instead of 3 that were in the original pulse time we were supposed to be there. The shot of 9916 shows the mountain backdrop that is present when taking

photos at the Chieftain Centre, the downtown transfer point. The second bus on that day was 9946, one of the Darts in the new BC Transit paint scheme. However, with 48 people taking photos, and the bus arriving late and only stopping for about 30 seconds, I did not get a picture of it. The attached photo of bus 9905, also in the new scheme was taken during the pre-trip earlier that week on a nice sunny day.

From Squamish, it was onto Whistler 60 kilometres away. Whistler was one of the two sites of the 2010 Winter Olympics. We stopped at the Gondola Transit Exchange which is at the south end of Whistler Village. Enough time was given to BHA members here to take photos, have lunch and explore Whistler Village. Many BHA members went to take "selfies" with the Olympic Rings as a backdrop at the north end of the Village. The fleet of Whistler Transit is all Nova (*photo at right*). The fleet of New Flyer H40LFR fuel cell buses that was purchased in 2010 (for \$ 2.1 million per bus) had been withdrawn from service in 2015. They were all sold to Complete Coach Works of Riverside, CA and none have been resold at this point.



After lunch, we headed to the garage. The old Hydrogen fuelling facility for the buses was torn down and a new CNG fuelling facility will eventually be put in that area. Whistler is scheduled to get XN40 buses at the end of the year. At the garage, there as a Prevost H3-45 on layover for Pacific Coach Lines and the driver pulled out of the parking spot so we could photograph it. In addition to plenty of Novas (including a few suburbans like 9298), there were also three New Flyer D40LF buses and one Dart withdrawn from Squamish. Apparently at least one of the New Flyers was pressed into service during the recent winter tourist season, but they are generally just being stored there.

After Whistler, we headed back to Vancouver. Destined to Canada Place, we crossed the Lion's Gate Bridge and viewed Stanley Park as we were coming into downtown. There were three cruise ships in town for the afternoon but by the time we arrived, most of the tourists had arrived back at their ships. There were still a few charter buses present during our time there, however. Some people elected to visit the Olympic Cauldrons while we were at this stop.

It was now time to head back to the hotel after another successful convention. It was 31 years since the BHA returned to Vancouver. Hopefully the next return there will not be as long.

Mark your calendars now. The 2018 BHA Convention is in Cincinnati/Dayton from Thursday, June 7 to Saturday, June 9, 2018. The host city has not been finalized yet but either way, we will be visiting all cities in the Cincinnati-Columbus-Dayton triangle.

